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INSPIRING HOME LIFE
OCTOBER 2015

The Spring Issue

100+ *fresh and cheerful* home, food and garden ideas



KNOCKOUT GARDEN
IT COST A BOMB – BUT WOW!
page 32

A BOUNTIFUL BALCONY GARDEN *page 92*

DREAMY RHUBARB & CUSTARD CAKE *page 126*

A HOT PINK READING CORNER *page 55*

FUN & ART-FILLED IN MATAKANA

MUDDY BOOTS ARE WELCOME IN OUR COVER HOME *page 22*

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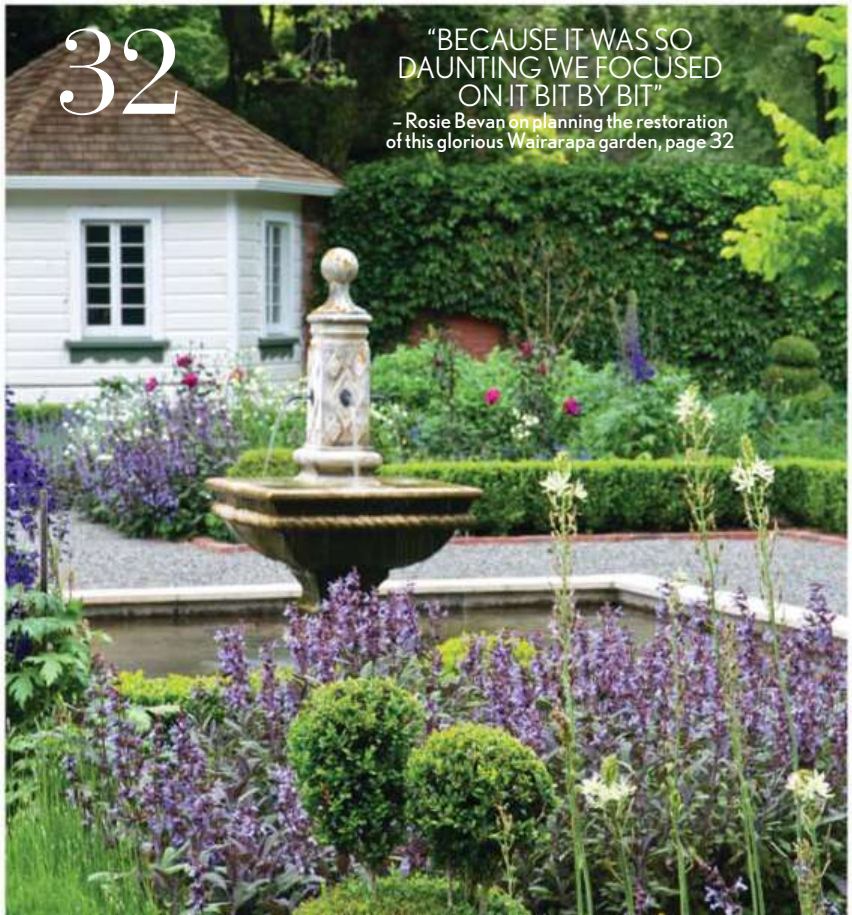
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EDITORIAL

EDITOR - *Sally Duggan*
ART DIRECTOR - *Richard Brunton*
DEPUTY EDITOR - *Rosemary Barraclough*
FOOD EDITOR - *Sally Butters*
DESIGNER - *Sue Thomas*
SUB-EDITOR - *Jan Chilwell*
STYLE CONSULTANT - *Tracey Strange Watts*
STAFF WRITER/SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR - *Andrea Warmington*
andrea.warmington@nzhouseandgarden.co.nz, (09) 909 6882
PHOTO EDITOR - *Sybille Hetet*

ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING MANAGER - *Elaine Millar*
elaine.millar@fairfaxmags.co.nz, (09) 909 6880
DIRECT ADVERTISING CONSULTANT
Melisa Sinclair
melisa.sinclair@fairfaxmags.co.nz, 0275 796 247
DIRECTORY SALES MANAGER - *Niki O'Brien*
niki.o'brien@fairfaxmedia.co.nz, 021 630 099
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR - *Lee-Anne Mitcheson*
lee-anne.mitcheson@fairfaxmedia.co.nz, (09) 374 7759
ADVERTISING AGENCY SALES
Auckland, (09) 970 4000; Wellington, (04) 496 9800; Christchurch, (04) 474 0456
Australia, chriswilliams@fairfaxmedia.com.au, +61 (0) 407 913324

CORPORATE

NORTHERN REGION MANAGER - *David Penny*
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR - *Kate Coughlan*
COMMERCIAL MANAGER - *Duncan Brough*
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER MAGAZINES - *Liz Badenhorst*
PRODUCTION MANAGER - *Sara Hirst*
DESIGN POOL MANAGER - *Olivia Tuck*

HOW TO CONTACT US

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES
Tel (09) 909 6800, fax (09) 909 6802
Editorial email: editor@nzhouseandgarden.co.nz
Street address: 317 New North Rd, Eden Terrace, Auckland 1021
Postal address: PO Box 6341, Wellesley St, Auckland 1141
Story archives/photo sales email: sybille.hetet@fairfaxmags.co.nz

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(Source: Nielsen CMI Q4 2013-Q3 2014)

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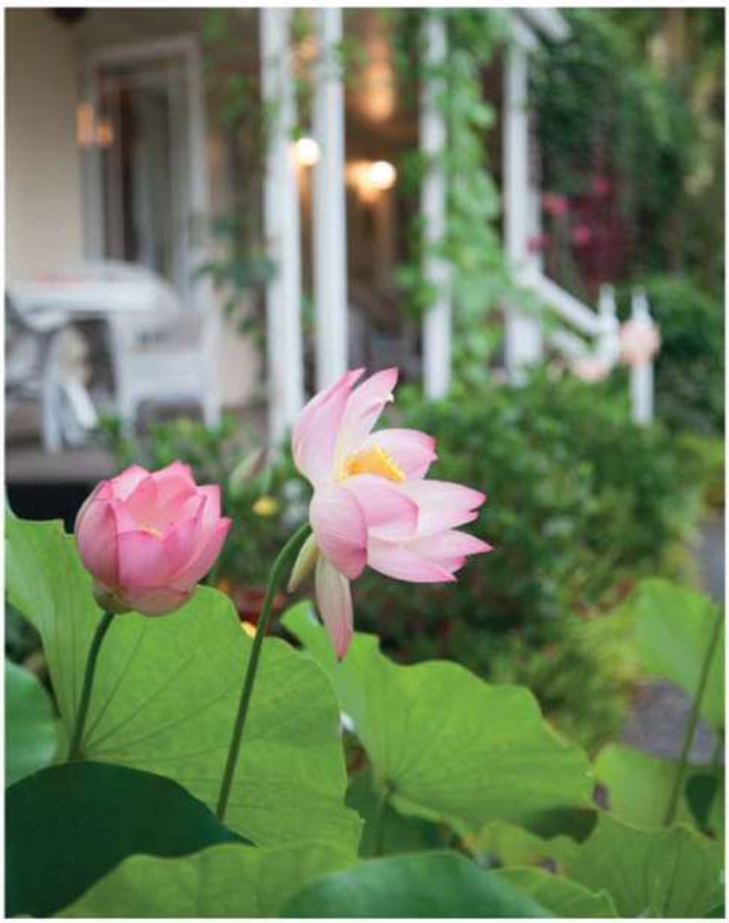
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ABOVE Sally Duggan.
BELOW Blooms of all sorts abound in our bright and breezy spring issue, including these dramatic lotus blossoms in a Northland garden inspired by the owner's first sight of the jungle (see page 100).





Spring is a bit like New Year for our homes: time to make changes and hatch new plans. I reckon that means it's also the perfect time to subscribe. You can get your monthly dose of inspiration delivered to you for a bit more than half the retail price. See page 114.

From the editor

Pale pink blossoms float onto a tidy Tauranga lawn. Snowdrops glow among dark natives in a Gore garden. Bright red creeper spills over an Auckland footpath.

As the gardeners in this issue remind us, spring is a personal thing. It arrives, in its own specific way, to each little corner of the country. We wait for our own backyard "spring's here!" moment and when it arrives we wax lyrical and maybe post pictures on Facebook. Spring makes poets of us all.

At my place, it's the big elm that announces spring. When the kids were little, we made a tradition of it: inspecting the stark silver branches regularly from late August. When the first lime green leaf appeared, we'd stand and marvel for a bit – "So delicate; it's like a feather!" We'd mark the date on the calendar and sometimes the kids would write a story about it at school.

This year, though, there are no elm leaves. Midway through last summer, we noticed withered sections in the green canopy of the tree. It was diagnosed as Dutch elm disease and it spread rapidly. By the end of the season, council arborists were telling us our tree needed to come down.

And so, in two days' time, a team of arborists will arrive to fell the elm, which is probably 150 years old. Roped up, they will climb right up the tree – higher than our kids ever went – and chainsaw off its massive branches, lowering them on pulleys so as not to hit the house. They will feed the branches through a chipper and truck away mountains of elm chips, making a muddy mess of our spring-soft lawn. It'll be expensive, noisy, dramatic. Nick and I considered taking the day off work to watch, but decided it would be too sad.

Instead, in the weekend, we sat on our deck in the gentle spring sunshine and looked up at our beautiful, dead tree to say goodbye. Tui were playing in its branches. We wondered where all the creatures that used the tree – wood pigeons and the rosellas and starlings and one fat possum – will go. We thought about how different our place will feel under exposed sky.

Maybe, said Nick, looking on the bright side, our little oak tree will do better once the elm is gone. Maybe it will grow to fill some of the space.

I looked through the binoculars at the oak. On its branches, were the first new spring leaves: lime green smudges against the silver branches. Delicate, like feathers.

Happy spring.

Sally

SALLY DUGGAN

SALLY WEARS A TWELFTH STREET BY CYNTHIA VINCENT DRESS FROM LITTLE STITCH; PHOTOGRAPH BY JANE USSHER; MAKE-UP BY LEISA WELCH; HAIR BY MICHAEL KENT


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BEHIND THE SCENES



SUE ALLISON

WRITER

An expedition to the Galapagos Islands to celebrate her brother Richard's 60th birthday was miraculous in more ways than one, says Sue Allison, pictured with a giant tortoise. Richard and Sue have seven children in total (aged 17 to 31) and all joined their parents "when normally it's hard to get them to dinner at the same time," says Sue. But it was the wildlife they saw during their eight-day boat trip that was truly extraordinary. "You'd be snorkelling along and a lizard would swim past. The most amazing thing was how fearless the animals are. You could get about three inches away from fluffy albatross chicks or lie on the beach by a sea lion." Returning to reality, Sue has been hard at work writing for this issue (page 62) and finding fabulous houses for *NZ House & Garden*'s 2015 Canterbury House Tour.



NADIA ISAACS

LIFESTYLE & EVENT MANAGER

Nadia Isaacs is deep in planning mode for next year's *NZ House & Garden* House Tours. She's responsible for making sure the Matakana, New Plymouth, Wellington and Christchurch tours run smoothly, taking care of every little detail, from sending out the tickets to planning the route for tourgoers (tickets go on sale in late October). Nadia's looking forward to going on the tours too; she missed out last year as they coincided with the birth of her son Qiraan. Nadia was inspired by the Interior of the Year awards, another *NZ House & Garden* event, when decorating Qiraan's jungle-themed room. "One of the 2013 winners was a beautiful yellow nursery; it looked like a happy space to be in. For our first baby, we wanted to make the nursery special. It's my favourite place to spend time with my boy."



A LONG SHOT

Artist Virginia Leonard, whose Matakana living room was the location for this month's cover shoot, can sum up the experience with just one word: "long". Virginia says she couldn't believe the time it took to get one perfect photograph. "I thought they'd be in and out in about 40 minutes, but it took all day! It was really interesting to see the attention they paid to detail; how precise they were. I teased them a lot. I said, 'What are you doing? Maybe you should move that petal 3mm that way.' But it really was great fun."

PHOTOGRAPH: *BELINDA MERRIE*
STYLING: *RICHARD BRUNTON*
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TALKBACK



Chosen hues

In the August Talkback you asked about favourite colour combos. My enthusiasm for turquoise, white, lime and red appears throughout our house and garden. Even the garden furniture is painted – a turquoise table, a red seat. The colours feature in cabinetry, tiles and accessories as well as on the kitchen and dining room blinds.
Gill Burke, Eastbourne

Shine on

Here's a bit of advice that really works. When pushed for time, polish one object – preferably silver – till it shines. Set it in a prominent place and no one will notice a light patina of dust elsewhere.
Gary Bedggood, Porirua

Oh, the possibilities...

The most wonderful words in your August issue were from Helen Strevens who said the best time of the week was Monday morning, when "anything seems possible, just like a blank sheet of paper". She inspired me to hunt out my huge Post-it pad, coloured markers and loads of past *NZ House & Garden* issues and start to plan the long overdue renovation of the upper storey of our 1920s home.
Kareena Lundy, Timaru

Lofty ambitions

I look at our garden shedding the remnants of winter and alive with new growth and think about how over the past couple of years I have felt overwhelmed by the amount of work needed to get our house and garden looking renewed. Then I read your story about what Kris Herbert and her family faced in getting their Lyttelton loft, looking great (*Open to the Future*, September, pictured left). Even though we don't have abundant time and money, at least we're not battling against the odds like Kris. Time to do my own nest building.
Wendy Voegelin, Drury



Magic spring moments

Winter roses make me smile and think spring is not far away.
Pauline O'Sullivan, Waipukurau

I live within sight of Mt Ruapehu. We don't do an autumn clean-up, but leave it as protection against the frosts. I was surprised to see in among the dead leaves and fern fronds a patch of yellow and purple crocus – right next to a pond covered in ice.
Trish Smart, Raetihi

In my tiny garden the snowdrops raise their pure white heads while the frost and/or snow is still on the ground. They give me joy until the camellias grace us with their presence.
Beverley Jarvis, Rangiora

Our South Canterbury farm is part of our garden landscape and, for me, spring comes with the newborn lambs and new shoots of grass.
Roxane Fenwick, Timaru

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We love the nitty-gritty advice from Trish Bartleet (page 108): when buying new plants, spend as much on soil and plant food as you do on the plant. Got your own practical bit of garden advice?

We love your letters Email your top gardening tips (or anything else that's on your mind) to editor@nzhouseandgarden.co.nz. Every letter published next issue will win this Moisture Mist Beauty Cake Limited Edition, designed by artist Michael Tompsett, valued at $48. Specially formulated for New Zealand women, Beauty Cake creates a smooth flawless finish with buildable coverage.





DETAIL OF THE MONTH

We're targeting two birds with one shout-out this month. Two of our homeowners (pages 38 and 102) have the privilege of hosting a feathered friend in their gardens: respectively, a peacock (left) and a golden pheasant known as Dion. And look what a pretty picture they make. True, this is not an option for most of us, but you can always get a bird bath or feeder and co-opt the passing flock.

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THESE PAGES Art dominates the Matakana living room shared by Virginia Leonard, Oliver King and their children Coco (here with Claude the West Highland terrier) and Orlando; a large-scale abstract work by Virginia hangs at left (see it on the cover); above a wooden cabinet from The Vitrine hang portraits by Gavin Hurley (above the record player) and Kirsten Roberts, next to a large photographic work by Oliver; the dog sculpture on the hearth is by Barry Lett; the light shade, from May Time Marketing , hangs from an old horsehair and plaster ceiling rose; Virginia reckons the Middle Earth gold lustre tiles on the fireplace are "probably the most expensive thing in the house, but I just wanted a little bit of bling".

Perfectly imperfect

Builders with *muddy boots* were welcome when this *Matakana home* was being built – it was all part of the plan to create a *warmly weathered feel*

WORDS **ANDREA WARMINGTON** / PHOTOGRAPHS **EMMA BASS**









Don't you dare," said artist Virginia Leonard to the workman who arrived to paint the unfinished raised ceiling in her living room. The wooden boards had received a light undercoat before they'd been put up and nothing more. "But they're beautiful," says Virginia. "They've still got all the old chalk marks from the builders and I love it like that."

The macrocarpa floors throughout the Matakana homestead, which Virginia shares with husband Oliver King and children Coco, 13, and Orlando, 12, are another example of the artist's particular brand of perfect imperfection. "Once they'd laid it," says Virginia, "I made the builders walk through the house with muddy boots for the next four weeks because I wanted all the dirt to get into the cracks. We wanted to make it look old – like the floor had been here a long, long time." >

THIS PAGE (from top) A view through to the kitchen and dining room; the macrocarpa floors were lightly buffed and oiled once the builders had made their mark with their muddy boots: "I love the floor, I think it's the best part of the house," says Virginia. Virginia and Claude. Works by (from left) Jim Cooper, Virginia, and Madeleine Child.
OPPOSITE The candlesticks on the dining table, which often functions as Virginia's workspace, are by Dominic Burrell.





THIS PAGE Virginia's brother, who owns Christchurch-based Euroform Kitchens, designed and built the kitchen cabinetry: "He brought it all up in a big truck with one of his joiners and fitted it all"; a sculpture by Jim Cooper stands on the benchtop; the pendant lights above the kitchen island are from The Vitrine.
OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Shelves display more work by Jim Cooper and yellow candles by Vicky Farring shaped like a gasoline canister, a lighter and a torch. A paint-splattered table that once lived in Virginia's studio now displays two of her early ceramic works in the entranceway; the drawing is by Richard Lewer. A work by Judy Millar hangs on the far wall of the dining room; the piece on the right is by Zac Langdon-Pole. Virginia bought the light shade overseas.





"WE SPEND MONEY THAT WE DON'T HAVE ON ART, BUT YOU GET THE BUG"

It worked. The homestead, set in the countryside just outside Matakana township about an hour's drive north of Auckland, looks as if it's been here for a century, at least – certainly longer than three years. "Most people come here and they are very surprised it's a new house," says Virginia. "But it's warm. That's the difference."

The house was designed by Virginia and Oliver's good friend and fellow artist Mike Petre, "a painter who always wanted to design houses," says Virginia. "We said, 'If we built, would you design it?' and he said he would. And that's why we did it, actually. He designed it and we said, 'Great, let's do it'."

Their house also served as a dummy run for the nearby Vivian Gallery, which Virginia and Oliver set up with business partner Helen Crosby and Petre designed. "The gallery is very similar to this and made of exactly the same materials," says Virginia.

Much like a gallery, Virginia and Oliver's house has masses of wall space for the couple to display their extensive collection of art ("We spend money that we don't have on art, but you get the bug," says Virginia with a shrug).

"Mike knew we needed lots of picture walls and lots of shelves because we collect objects. So it wasn't going to be a house that had a whole lot of glass walls, because that wouldn't work for us." >





THIS PAGE A photographic work by Julie Firth hangs at the end of the hallway; the blind on the right is actually an artwork by Richard Lewer; the light shades are from Madder & Rouge.
OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Woven pendants from May Time hang on either side of the bed in the main bedroom. Coco in her bedroom. Claude stands guard at the entranceway. The guest bedroom. Virginia bought the antique-style mirror in the kids' bathroom at Citta Design.

Tucked in among works by New Zealand artists such as Madeleine Child, Ian Cheesman, Emily Siddell, Richard Lewer and Wayne Youle, are pieces by Oliver and Virginia.

Oliver's eerie photographic portraits of women's faces blurred by pastel polka dots feature throughout the house.

Virginia painted for 30 years but switched to ceramics three years ago after helping Coco with a school project: "I went and got some clay for her and there was a whole lot left over, so I had a go." Inspired, she asked a ceramicist friend if she could work in his studio for a bit.

"He thought I'd make a couple of ashtrays and get bored and wander off and that would be it," says Virginia. "Then, about three months later, he suddenly turned around and said, 'Oh my God, you've taken over my whole studio. You're using my kiln 24 hours a day. I can't make anything.' He said: 'Go and buy your own kiln and set up your own pottery studio'."

She did buy a kiln, but doesn't work in her studio, preferring to create her heavily decorated, intricate pieces at the dining room table. "My pieces are self-portraits, really," says Virginia. A bad car accident when she was 20 left her with chronic pain. "I deal with it in each work. With clay you can push and pull things out, you can make things crack, you can make things really beautiful and you can also make things quite ugly. Each work represents how I'm feeling each day. It's a continuous conversation I have with the idea of pain and exposing it or hiding it; whether you show people or you don't." >





"MOST PEOPLE COME HERE AND THEY ARE VERY SURPRISED IT'S A NEW HOUSE. BUT IT'S WARM. THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE"









DESIGN NOTE

Virginia believes people too often "forget about feel and sound in a house". She used rough-sawn planking for floors, walls and ceilings wherever she could, "so the house feels warm inside; it's nice to touch, not cold and hard, and the acoustics are good".

She wants to experiment with bigger works but bigger works require a bigger kiln… one that would not fit into her wooden studio (and would also be a fire hazard). "I've just bought a new kiln; a big, huge, walk-in kiln but I can't have it in my studio. So we're selling the house because we can't fit the kiln in!"

She may be laughing but she's completely serious. The couple have bought land nearby and plan to build again. The house will be much the same as this one, but with a "big, corrugated iron shed with a concrete floor" for the kiln. "Everybody says, 'Oh, you'll go back to painting,' but I really don't think I will. I'm way too into ceramics. They take weeks and weeks and weeks but I quite like that they're not immediate. I'm quite an impatient person, but now I have to sit around and wait for things to dry. And I think that's quite good for me." ■

THIS PAGE (from top) Coco hangs out with Claude on the covered verandah. Virginia and Oliver wanted the newly built home to look as if it had been here "for a long, long time".
OPPOSITE (from top) A quiet spot on the covered balcony. Virginia puts the finishing touches on one of the intricate ceramic works in her studio: "I like the risk of clay; you don't know what's going to happen. It can break or explode. As I build, things can fall over and collapse. I push things to the limit when I build. I really like the idea of, 'Is it going to survive?'"







Q&A

THE JOYS OF WOOD: We have rough-sawn floors and rough-sawn sarking on the walls, so there is heaps of texture in the house.

BEST MONEY SPENT: Fireplaces. We heat our house through the wood-burner, which is huge, and the fireplace. No heat pumps in sight. There's nothing better than sitting in front of an open fire.

BEST PIECE OF ADVICE RECEIVED: From Mike Petre. He said enjoy every minute of the build – not many people get to build and it's a privilege. He was right.

BEST REASON TO LIVE IN MATAKANA: The community is tight and a lot of people are very active within the community. I am involved with two others in the Matakana Street Tree Planting Project at the moment. All done in our spare time.

FAVOURITE LOCAL SHOP: The Village Bookshop. I am a regular there and I love it. I always have a robust conversation about the book I have just read. And of course The Vivian Gallery: great group shows and a beautiful building and grounds.

BEST PLACE TO STAY: Riverside Matakana, owned by two good friends: well-equipped wooden baches on the river with a pool and a tennis court (riversidematakana.co.nz). We have had some great parties down at Riverside.

Virginia Leonard



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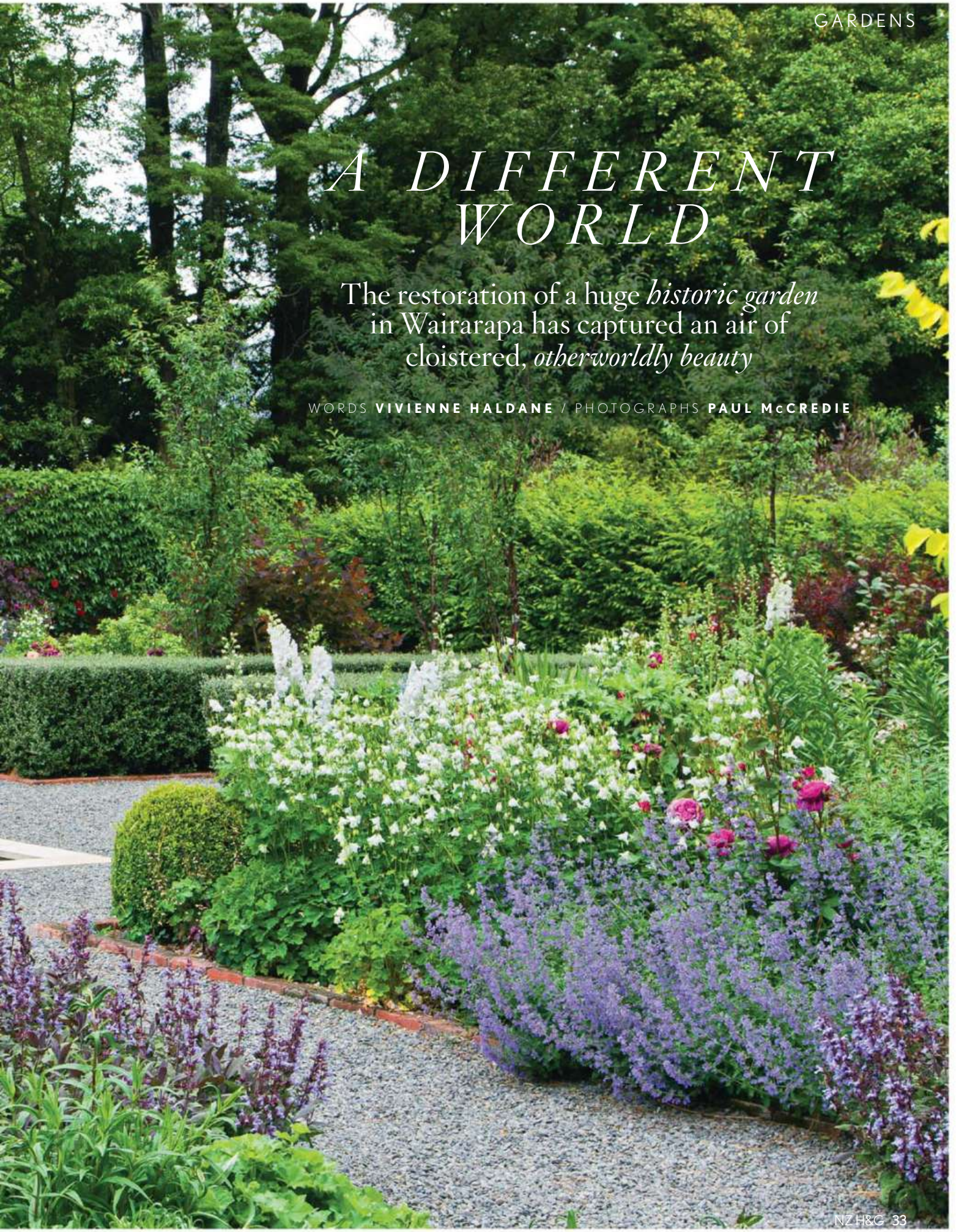


THESE PAGES At Fernside, Rosie and Colin Bevan's Wairarapa garden, the Secret Garden is centred on an Italian fountain, found by the Bevans in a salvage yard in the UK; the garden beds include purple salvia, blue and white delphiniums, catmint, aquilegia, the dark pink rose 'Ebb Tide' and buxus topiaries.

A DIFFERENT WORLD

The restoration of a huge *historic garden* in Wairarapa has captured an air of cloistered, *otherworldly beauty*

WORDS **VIVIENNE HALDANE** / PHOTOGRAPHS **PAUL McCREDIE**





At times, Rosie and Colin Bevan despaired of the massive project they'd undertaken in restoring Fernside, a sprawling country mansion with an 8ha garden near Featherston in Wairarapa. So they took themselves off to visit some of the UK's finest heritage gardens – Hidcote, Sissinghurst, Great Dixter (see page 116), Rousham and Heligan – looking for inspiration and the mental energy to plough on. "We've pinched many ideas from those gardens," says Rosie.

It was mostly out of curiosity that Rosie and Colin went to have a "nosy" when Fernside came on the market in 2007. At the time, they were living in the Wellington suburb of Kelburn with their teenage children, Thomas and Annaliese. They also owned a lifestyle block at Mangaroa, near Upper Hutt, where they were intending to live eventually. "I came here hoping I'd be able to get some gardening ideas for there," says Rosie, who'd never gardened on a large scale before.

Although everything was terribly rundown, the Bevans were smitten by Fernside. "The garden had a wonderful underlying structure. We could see it had been a beautiful garden once and we felt it deserved to be restored to its former glory." >

THIS PAGE In the Secret Garden, the formal straight lines of the pond, gravel and hedging contrast with informal plantings; in the background is a hundred-year-old shelter belt of Scots pine. Team Fernside: Danny Doherty, Ron Wall, Clare Shearman (head gardener), Rosie Bevan, Colin Bevan with Dougal the Scottish deer hound, Diarmaid Ross and Pete Janssen.
OPPOSITE A view of the rill and fountain from the catmint-bordered archway of espaliered apple trees: 'Takapuna Russet' and 'Jack Humm'; *Corokia* 'Geenty's Ghost' forms the path border interplanted with *Prunus serrula* 'Tibetica', noted for its copper-coloured bark.





THESE PAGES (clockwise from above) A view from the Oak Lawn showing, among the beech trees, the "sound shell" (the brick alcove at left) and wooden pump house; the brick wall dates from 1909. The sound shell and pond, inspired by the style of classic English architect Edwin Lutyens, are situated at the end of the rill; the water comes from the lake; a king fern nestles in the corner. An original stone balustrade at the end of the oak lawn provides a perfect home for *Ficus pumila* (creeping fig). >







THIS PAGE (from top) The Victorian hothouse and greenhouse are the next projects for restoration; a path to the right leads to the lake. "Peacocks add personality to the garden," says Rosie.
OPPOSITE (from top) To the rear of house, the Sunken Garden, built in 1890-1900, has been brought back to life; ligularia, *Lychnis coronaria* (rose campion), aquilegia and foxgloves surround the wishing well. The seat on the landing stage beside the lake is framed by rhododendrons, bold-leafed *Gunnera manicata,* and cherry and maple trees.

"We drove home in stunned silence and, although I could see Colin was excited, I didn't want to say too much in case I influenced him. I realised it would be an enormous undertaking. However, we knew we had the financial resources to make a difference, so we took the plunge and bought it."

In its glory days, when Fernside's original owners, English businessman and farmer Charles Elgar and his locally born wife Ella Pharazyn, lived there, the house and grounds were a hub for business and entertainment. But after they died – Charles in 1930 and Ella in 1945 – Fernside had a series of owners who struggled to give the grand old home the attention and resources it deserved.

Designed by celebrated architect Heathcote Helmore in the Georgian style, and built in 1924, Fernside was in a sorry state by the time the Bevans took it on. Its once immaculately landscaped grounds were overrun with noxious plants and fallen trees and mobs of sheep rampaged through the garden. "The hedge was ragged around the edges where they had chewed it and elsewhere they'd nibbled everything to stubs. But each season brought little gems as everything started popping out of the ground. We didn't know what we had until it started growing back."

It took them a year to mend the house exterior before they began to tackle the garden. "Because it was so daunting, we focused on it bit by bit. We had to be logical and strict in our approach," says Rosie. >







THIS PAGE (from top) Yellow *Phlomis fruticosa* (Jerusalem sage) borders a pathway in the Gate Garden at the front of the property. The pink rhododendrons provide a backdrop for the grey foliage of *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' (wormwood), *Stachys byzantina* (lamb's ears) and *Cynara cardunculus* (cardoon).
OPPOSITE (from top) The restored Knot Garden, overlooked by massive oaks, contains white, red and pink roses; some transplanted from the Sunken Garden. Perennial foxgloves add colour to the Gate Garden pathway: "The hostas are kept free of slugs and snails by chickens free-ranging in the garden," says Rosie; at the end of the path is a gum tree.

"We began with the lake area, as it was so overgrown with blackberries and Japanese honeysuckle. We dredged the silted-up lake and shored up the edges with gabion baskets. We reinstated paths and bridges, the vegetable garden, planted a new orchard, recreated the native garden and replanted herbaceous borders."

Fortunately, Colin (who has worked in IT and was one of the original shareholders in Trade Me) had the management skills to spearhead such a large project. Says Rosie: "He's the one who has driven things along. Restoring something on this scale requires constant decision-making. He has a big vision and doesn't let the garden rest. I think everyone [they employ a team of five full-time gardeners] hides when they see him coming."



Head gardener and landscape designer Clare Shearman is in charge of creating the overall design and works closely with Rosie. "She and I are so much in tune with each other. I can always count on her to create something that I appreciate."

Clare, who commutes daily from Wellington to work at Fernside, once worked as head of topiary at Hever Castle (the childhood home of Anne Boleyn) in Kent. She was working as head gardener at Government House when the job at Fernside came up in 2012 and jumped at the chance to be part of such a massive project. "It's amazing to work here. When you enter the gates (the oak-lined driveway is 2km long), it seems as if you are in a different world."

Adds Colin: "That's exactly the effect we are after. We've planted natives around the perimeter to try and close off the outside so it's as if you come into a *Brigadoon*-type atmosphere, where time has stood still." They've also done an enormous amount of planting of oaks, elms, maples and liquidambars, tilias, magnolias, cherries and fruit trees.

Even in late summer, the herbaceous borders at Fernside are still ablaze with colour. "The penstemons are psychedelic, and there are daisies, irises, scabiosa, aquilegia and really gorgeous delphiniums, all making a nice show," says Clare. >







Each year, Rosie, Colin and Clare sit down to discuss new projects and improvements: "Soon we will look at replanting the tennis court garden with big blocks of fairly bold colours – probably lilies – because it is seen from a distance," says Clare.

The gardeners are currently creating a chess set out of buxus and there's to be a new summerhouse in the formal Secret Garden, which Colin describes as "our stamp on the property".

"It was an area of paddock on the other side of the rill wall that we enclosed on three sides with hornbeam hedges and made into a formal geometric garden with seating for quiet contemplation." Here Clare has kept in mind the feminine colours that Rosie enjoys most: the pinks and mauves of herbs like sage and nepeta (fragrant catmint) and large beds of roses and dahlias.

One problem, says Rosie, is trying to find out how the house and garden looked originally. "Though we've collected many photographs of the garden's evolution we have no photographs of the glasshouses – our current challenge is restoring them."

THIS PAGE (from top) A picturesque wrought-iron gate marks the entrance to the garden from the circular courtyard. A bronze statue of Mercury in the restored formal rose garden; the roses are: 'Aotearoa', 'Pavarotti', 'Blackberry Nip', 'Sylvia', 'Hamilton Gardens', 'Sexy Rexy', 'Parnell Heritage' and 'My Girl'. **OPPOSITE** The heritage homestead provides a neutral backdrop for pink and white 'Iceberg' roses.



For Colin it's been an all-encompassing journey. He is supposed to have retired, he says, but he still has business interests here and in the US. He hates to think of how much they have spent on Fernside. "It's frightening," he says. "Yes," agrees Rosie, "we dread to think about that."

But they have had countless hours of pleasure from sharing what they have achieved with others. "It is a joy when visitors are here and when we have family gatherings at Christmas," says Rosie. "The house and garden come alive." ■

Q&A

CLIMATE: Hot dry summers, wet winters; a few frosts. Strong winds.

SOIL TYPE: Slightly acid but quite variable with patches of clay and sand. Compost is made in several huge bins.

PLANTS THAT DO WELL: Rhododendrons, camellias; hellebores in winter and daffodils and bluebells in the woodlands in spring.

IF I COULD BRING THE ORIGINAL OWNERS BACK: I would show them the Secret Garden.

NONE OF THIS COULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED: Without such a brilliant team of gardeners, including our first head gardener, Angus Smith, who started the ball rolling back in 2008.

THE GARDENS ARE OPEN: As part of the Wairarapa Garden Tour, 7-8 November, in support of the Pukaha Mount Bruce sanctuary for endangered wildlife. Also for groups by appointment.

Rosie Bevan



KILLS WEEDS TO THE ROOTS... *FAST!*

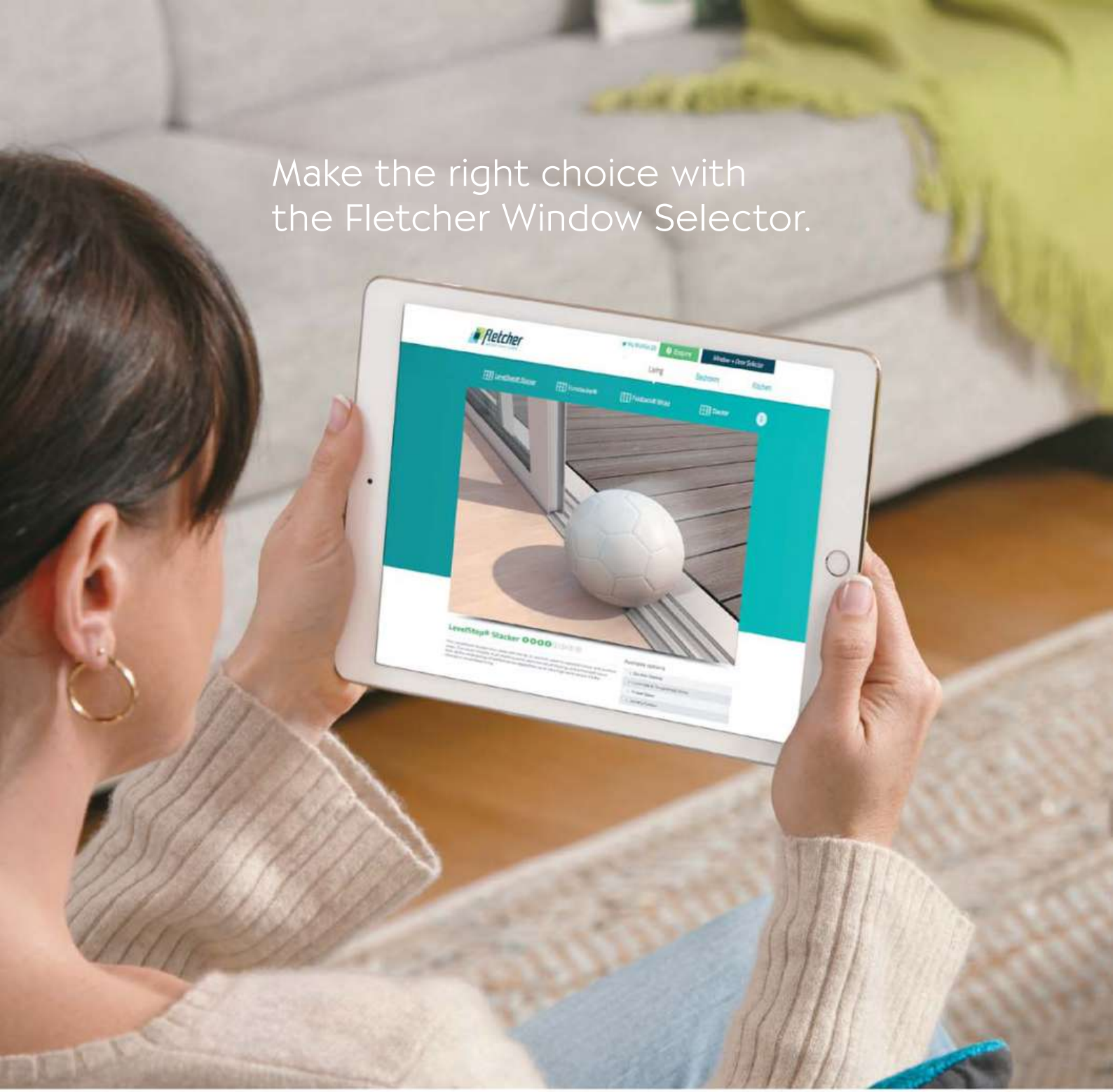


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ANTENNA

Eight pages of news and design trends



Modernise your existing all-white collection with tableware in a contemporary matt finish. Plates $24 and $34, small bowls $24, serving bowls $35 and $59, storage jars $39 and $49, washed linen napkins $49 (for four) and vase $49, all from Nest, nest-direct.com; white "milk" bottle, stylist's own.

STYLING: TRACEY STRANGE WATTS; PHOTOGRAPHY: BELINDA MERRIE

NEWS SEPTEMBER

Intriguing snippets from our trend-spotters

COMPILED BY **ANDREA WARMINGTON**



HOW TO: GET STARTED WITH WALLPAPER

Fallen in love with a beautiful wallpaper but afraid to make a big commitment? Start small. Line inside a bookshelf with a bold pattern or experiment in smaller spaces, such as a powder room, before working your way up to a higher-profile area, such as the living room. Arini wallpaper by Matthew Williamson for Osborne & Little, available at Seneca, seneca.co.nz.



BIRD WATCHING

This charmingly old-fashioned canvas wall hanging features an illustration reproduced from colour plates in the now rare 19th century book *The Birds of America*, by naturalist and painter John James Audubon. *American Flamingo* wall hanging $335 from teapea.co.nz.



FAST FLORA

Have you ever considered a flower subscription? Florists throughout the country offer this convenient option for busy folk, delivering a bunch of flowers to your home every week, fortnight or month (we think it would make a lovely gift). Auckland's Bloom Social (bloomsocial.nz) have put their own spin on the idea; making just one style of bouquet a day to keep waste to a minimum.



SUPER SQUEEZE: A CELEBRATION

Twenty-five years after Philippe Starck designed the Juicy Salif citrus squeezer, its proud makers, Alessi, are celebrating this "milestone in the history of design" with two special editions – one in white-coated aluminium and one in cast bronze (pictured). They've even put out a tongue-in-cheek exploration of Juicy Salif semiotics (*25 Years Without Squeezing a Lemon*; starck.com). It's true this famously ambiguous objet has always had more on its dome than emptying the next lemon. It may even have survived global over-exposure with its "purity of intent" (whatever it was) intact. Now that's design. *Jan Chilwell*



TERRACOTTA MEETS TAPESTRY

Cross stitch outdoors? Yes, you heard right. The pretty patterns on these blue and white terracotta pots from French Country Collections look like a traditional cross stitch. Pots from $35 from undeuxtrois.co.nz.



3 DREAM DATES

SPRING FLING

David Hobbs' country garden Broadfield in Prebbleton, Canterbury, will play host to a Spring Fling on October 11, with artisan stalls, food and drink and activities for children. There will also be tours of the extensive grounds, which include a formal rose garden, a kauri forest and even a 140m canal.
11 October, 11am-5pm, Broadfields New Zealand Landscape Garden, 250 Selwyn Rd, Prebbleton, adult tickets $20 each, children free, available from eventfinda.co.nz.

COOK ISLAND QUILTING

This six-week course will introduce you to the beautiful, colourful quilts of the Cook Islands, known as tivaevae. Quilting was introduced to Cook Islands women by missionaries in the early 1800s. Since then the women have used their sewing and embroidery skills to make unique appliqué quilts. At this course, you can try your hand at a small project such as a cushion cover or tablecloth. *Course begins October 21, Glen Innes Community Centre, $70 for six sessions (including materials for the first night); find out more at selwyncomed.school.nz.*

TALK FOR TREE LOVERS

Tree huggers unite! That's the call from the Dunedin Botanic Garden, whose November HortTalk is all about trees. Arborists will offer top tips for tree selection, purchasing, formative pruning, staking and general maintenance to ensure tree health.
6 November, 12pm, Information Centre, lower Botanic Garden, Dunedin, free, dunedinbotanicgarden.co.nz. >



PADDLING AWAY

Ākau, a Kaikohe design studio that helps the local community and its young people, has released its first product. The Paddle Stool was designed in collaboration with Jayden Ruru, 18, who came up with an abstract version of the hoe (paddle) used to power a waka. "Jayden was pretty stoked that his ideas were turned into something real," says Ākau director Felicity Brenchley (also a judge in *NZ House & Garden*'s Interior of the Year awards). Now Jayden has joined Ākau's full-time youth programme. The limited run of stools, $350 each, will help fund the programme. To pre-order, go to akau.co.nz.



LIMITED EDITION

Auckland blogger Mel Chesneau (styledcanvas.com) keeps an eye out for new trends: Spring is the traditional month for a good sort-out, so why not make this the season you finally embrace the capsule wardrobe. The idea is to simplify your life and eliminate decision fatigue by keeping your wardrobe restricted to things you actually wear and that mix well together. I can't think of a better way to show off your new streamlined look than with these Fog Linen Brass Shirt Hangers, $14 each, available at Father Rabbit, fatherrabbit.com.



BACK TO NATURE

Moooi's latest collection of ornamental carpets is a glorious celebration of the natural world, featuring hyper-realistic depictions of crystals, flowers and birds. The Dutch design house uses a Chromojet 800 printer to produce their bold carpets, which means they're able to create an almost unlimited array of colours. Moooi Garden of Eden carpet $6615 from ecc.co.nz.



INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH

The classic cylinder lamp has received an industrial makeover from US-based Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co, with a perforated painted steel shade, grey concrete body and warm brass base. US$375 from schoolhouseelectric.com. >

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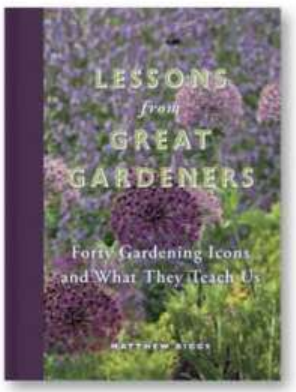


POT PLANT SAVIOUR

Now *this* is a brilliant solution for those who are prone to killing their pot pets. The body of this planter is filled with water, which is gradually released into the soil, keeping your plant watered for a month. Large Boskke Cube $59 from the cleverdesignstore.com.

WIN GARDENING WISDOM

"If you don't like a plant, get rid of it, you won't like it any better next year," advises Bev McConnell, of Ayrlies, near Auckland. She's one of 40 remarkable gardeners from around the world profiled; all share nuggets of wisdom garnered from lifetimes in the garden. *Lessons from Great Gardeners by Matthew Biggs, Exisle Publishing, $35, hardback. We have six copies to give away. Go to nzhouseandgarden.co.nz to enter.*





SPRING GREENING IN THE NAKI

Mark the arrival of spring by visiting some of Taranaki's renowned gardens, including Te Kainga Marire, Pukeiti and Hollard Garden, on this two-day tour. "Gardens have always been of particular importance to Taranaki," says Cathy Thurston, who founded the Gardens of Significance Tour. Tourgoers will get behind-the-scenes insights from the passionate curators and owners of each garden, says Cathy, as well as the opportunity to learn about their "hidden treasures". The Gardens of Significance Tour runs on selected dates throughout the year; $1895 per person, find out more at discovertaranaki.co.nz.



INTERVIEW

GARDEN OBJECTS

Kiwi landscape designer Jared Lockhart and English partner Lisa Davis, who recently returned from Britain to New Zealand, have opened a stylish online store, garden-objects.com. *Mel Chesneau asks Lisa all about it:*

WHY GARDEN OBJECTS? For the last 12 years Jared has been a landscape designer and noticed it was difficult to find quality garden tools that would last for life. So, the objects we stock must be built to last. And we must want to use them ourselves. They're often handmade, so each piece has an inherent beauty and a sense of timelessness. We're always on the lookout for new objects, which leads to meeting some incredibly interesting people.

WHAT TOOLS WOULD YOU SUGGEST FOR SPRING GARDENERS? Spring is a time for cultivation and preparing the ground for seedlings and new plants. We have raised beds, so we find the Grafa tools (pictured below) perfect for digging over and mulching. In larger plant beds we use the DeWit fork and spade. And we really enjoy using the Paper Potter to grow seeds; it's a fun, affordable way to fill up your garden. ■



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Hanging **greenery arrangement** by Scottie & Rose, 021 274 1537; **chair** $297 and **table** $366, both from Leopold Hall, leopoldhall.com; on table: Japanese **pruning shears** $189 from Everyday Needs, everyday-needs.com; Woodlook **pots** $19 each from Nest, nest-direct.com; Fog Linen **basket** (canoe shape) $36 from Father Rabbit, fatherrabbit.com; on deck: **gumboots** $49.99 from Remuera Palmers Garden Centre, palmers.co.nz; **watering can** $29.98 and **spade** $13.50, both from Mitre 10, mitre10.co.nz; white Kenyan **baskets** $129 large and $169 extra large from Nest; Fog Linen market **basket** $39 from Father Rabbit; **potted plants** from Remuera Palmers; hat stylist's own.

HARVEST HOME

Dedicate a quiet corner to the needs of the spring garden

STYLING **SARAH LODS** /PHOTOGRAPH **BELINDA MERRIE**

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TURN UP THE HEAT

The hot hues of the Indian subcontinent have always travelled well

STYLING **SARAH LODS** / PHOTOGRAPH **BELINDA MERRIE**

CRATE IDEA

Inspired by the new season, we've gone for a high-contrast mix of froth, colour and natural texture

WORDS + STYLING **TRACEY STRANGE WATTS**
PHOTOGRAPH **BELINDA MERRIE**
FLOWERS **FAIRY FLOWERS**

WE CREATED: A box filled with spring plants.
WHAT'S IN IT: Hyacinths, freesias, moss and twigs.
ABOUT THE CONTAINER: A small wooden storage box. Similar boxes can easily be found in stores such as Briscoes and Storage Box.
WHY IT WORKS: All spring flowers are "happy", but perhaps none more so than hyacinths. With their star-like blooms and solid, saturated colours, they have an intensity that is often best appreciated in single-variety arrangements.
WHY WE LIKE IT: We love the way the frothy but sturdy hyacinth heads contrast with the slender twigs and freesia stems. The box keeps things natural.
DETAILS: Ralph Lauren Empress coffee cup, saucer and plate $363 (for a five-place setting) from Cavit & Co, cavitco.com; oil painting stylist's own but similar mid-century works can be found at the Vintage Art Room store on Etsy, etsy.com.



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WORDS & STYLING **TRACEY STRANGE WATTS**

1 Beat table lamp by Tom Dixon $1745 from ECC, ecc.co.nz. **2** Michael Kors for Men $130. **3** Perricone MD Acyl-Glutathione $254 from Mecca Cosmetica, meccacosmetica.co.nz. **4** Estée Lauder Little Black Primer $50. **5** Sally Hansen Xtreme Wear Nail Colour in Black Out $9.99. **6** Linden Leaves Gold Body Oil $64.99. **7** Zoya Nail Polish in Ziv $23. **8** Lalique Rayons vase $4950 from Cavit & Co, cavitco.com. **9** Napoleon Perdis Auto Pilot Hydrating Milk Cleanser $75. **10** MOR Lip Macaron in Cassis Noir $9.99. **11** Michael Kors Gold Luxe Edition $170. **12** YSL Full Metal Shadow in Dewy Gold $55. **13** Guerlain Ecrin Couleur Eyeshadow in Gold $58. **14** Pepe Marble Mirror $968 from Simon James Concept Store, simonjamesdesign.com.

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The product most recommended by doctors for scars & stretch marks.

Colmar Brunton, 2014



"I've never written to a company before, either in praise or complaint of a product, but feel compelled to do so in this case. A few months back my father cut his forehead quite badly. It healed well, but left a really noticeable scar. A friend recommended Bio-Oil and the results were outstanding. Before long, the scar improved and now you can barely see it! I was so impressed that I also tried it on my uneven skin tone, and after only two months, the marks are not only significantly lighter, but my skin has never looked or felt better. Thanks for a product that does what it promises!" Claire Davies

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FURNISHING KIWI HOMES SINCE 1985

This year Warwick Fabrics New Zealand celebrates a milestone – 30 years of supplying beautiful textiles to New Zealanders. From humble beginnings in a Devonport garage the company has grown to be a leader in the country's interior design world.



Main picture: Axella, a new modern geometric collection that works well with today's increasingly organic and natural interiors.
Left: Growing a successful business over 30 years is something worth celebrating, say the team at Warwick Fabrics New Zealand, who shared this special cake from Bluebells Cakery.





Clockwise from left: The Hawaii collection is refreshingly light. Martin Irvine, founder of Warwick Fabrics New Zealand. A statement chair upholstered in Opal from the Tuileries range. Elliot, Warwick's elegant, wide-width linen-blend sheer, diffuses light beautifully.

It's hard to believe how much has changed in the 30 years Warwick Fabrics New Zealand has been supplying quality textiles, says the business' founder Martin Irvine. In the early days there were no mobile phones, no computers, not even a fax... What Martin did have, luckily, was a triple garage at his Devonport home, which was to be the base for the new business he started with his wife Liz in 1985. Martin, who was working in textiles, had been approached by Australian company Thomas Warwick & Co to expand into New Zealand. Martin recalls accepting the challenge "with limited experience and youthful enthusiasm". When the first container of velvet from Belgium was dropped off in his driveway, he had half of it pre-sold – which was fortunate, as it would not all have fitted in his garage.

Starting a new business was a little like "jumping off a cliff," recalls Martin, but those were the booming mid-80s. He quickly saw a gap in the market for leather and started to import it. "Everything was slick and modern; leather was exploding." When each shipment arrived, Martin would have hopeful buyers lined up with their cheque books at the ready. The business soon outgrew the garage and the move was made to a warehouse and the first showroom in Wilkins Street, Freemans Bay. This was the first of many moves as the business grew; it now has a purpose-built head office and showroom in Mairangi Bay, Auckland, and showrooms in Wellington and Christchurch.

Warwick New Zealand is part of a global operation, with design teams in Australia and the UK. Martin heads overseas regularly to find new products that will appeal to New Zealanders, looking at everything from furnishings to fashion and even gift-wrapping paper for clues about design trends. "The world is getting smaller, though, and what's selling in London and New York is now selling in Auckland at the same time."

Martin says plain fabrics are always big sellers locally: "When I started the business there were lots of patterns; somehow I don't think people will be going back to fully patterned couches!"

What was the company's top seller of all time? "Macrosuede. We introduced this advanced suede fabric into the middle market – it's been a huge success and is still selling well today."

The secret of Warwick New Zealand's success comes down to two things, Martin says: consistently brilliant customer service and supplying innovative, high-quality fabrics that are good value for money – something the company plans to keep doing for many years to come.





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SLICES OF LIFE

At this *Christchurch eyrie*, sight lines are arranged to provide tantalising glimpses of *what lies beyond*

WORDS **SUE ALLISON** / PHOTOGRAPHS **JANE USSHER**





THIS PAGE Victoria and Dave Gibbons have used Dulux 'Lyttelton' throughout the living area of their 1960s Christchurch house: "Almost every colour pops against it," says Victoria; the bowls on the Danish rosewood sideboard are by Anna Torfs and Victoria's parents found the glass buoy (right) on a beach; the painting is by Scottish artist Bruce McLean.
OPPOSITE One of Victoria's own paintings hangs above the fire; the giraffe-pattern floor rug is from CRONZ (Carpets and Rugs of New Zealand).



THIS PAGE This is first and foremost a family home, says Victoria; here Amelia, Victoria, Audrey, Ottilie, Dave and Timmy the dog relax in the living room; the painting is by Jane Zusters. **OPPOSITE** Large, comfortable B&B Italia wool sofas dominate the living room, which opens onto the deck with spectacular views over the city to the mountains; the sliding doors and deck were added after the earthquakes; Victoria and Dave are not too bothered that their spoodle Timmy has eaten the end of one of the sofas, now draped with a colourful woollen rug.

Sitting in Victoria and Dave Gibbons' house on the Cashmere hills in Christchurch is like being caught between the pages of that timeless children's book *Peepo!*. Doorways and openings give tantalising glimpses of what is beyond but never the whole picture – the end of a bed, the corner of a painting, a slice of stairway. To complete the storybook illusion, an exuberant dog and three small girls, one in a fairy dress, regularly flit past the peepholes.

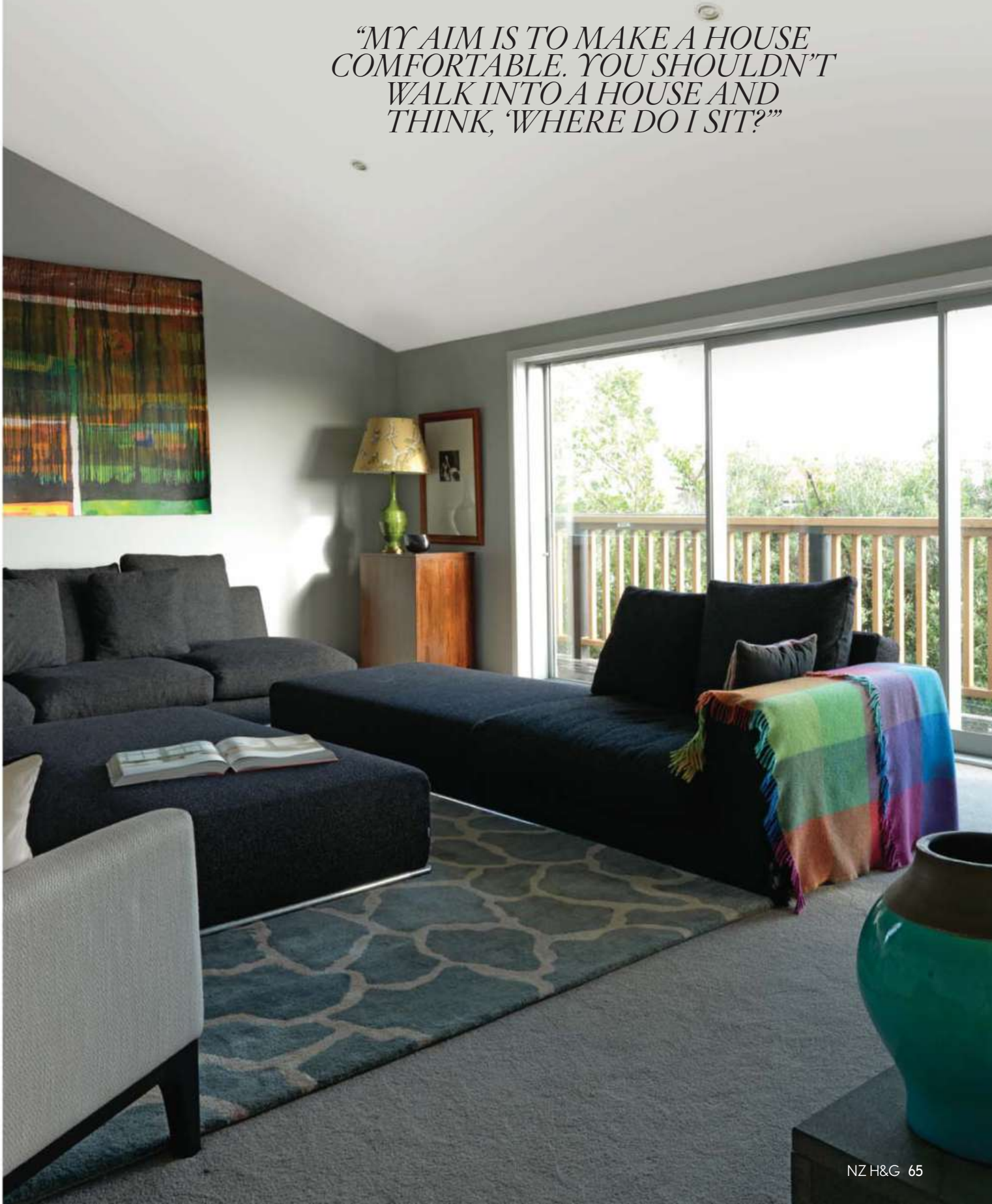
The peepholes – or "sight lines", to use the grown-up term – have been arranged to create a sense of openness in the multi-level house without forfeiting privacy.

"People think it's a new house, but it isn't. It was built in 1968 and we haven't changed the structure at all," says Victoria. "The sight lines have been very cleverly designed. You never feel hemmed in."

The Gibbons family clearly don't like being hemmed in. As well as a dearth of doors, the house has a conspicuous lack of curtains. The panorama seen from the living room and kitchen of the city and Southern Alps beyond is spectacular. "In the afternoon, the sun streams in and at night it's lovely seeing the sparkle of the city lights," says Victoria. Nor are there curtains in their bedroom. "We love being able to see the stars and wake up naturally to light."

Although the family have an unfettered view of the world, no one can look in. Their eyrie, nestled below the Sign of the Takahe, Christchurch's historic road house on the road to Governors Bay, is out of the sight lines of any of the neighbours. >

"MY AIM IS TO MAKE A HOUSE COMFORTABLE. YOU SHOULDN'T WALK INTO A HOUSE AND THINK, 'WHERE DO I SIT?'"





THIS PAGE (from top) A Verner Panton chandelier hangs over an old French marquetry table paired with Vitra Eames chairs, reflecting Victoria's love of mixing old and new. The Gibbons girls have inherited their mother's love of drawing and Victoria, who runs her interior design business, Halliburton Gibbons, from home, often finds children's artwork on the back of her plans.
OPPOSITE The wood panelling on the kitchen bench is original, but it has been refurbished; Victoria designed the drawer detailing on the kitchen units, which were made from oak by Alsop Joinery; the kitchen peeps through to the new snug, which overlooks the front driveway; the antique pedestal teapoy (or tea caddy stand; at right) is a family heirloom; hanging above it is an original pastel by Leila Macdonald, given by Victoria's father to her mother on her 30th birthday.

Dave and Victoria, who were living in London at the time, bought the house in 2003 while home for Christmas. "We poked our heads up by the gate and loved it. We went through with the real estate agent and bought it that afternoon," says Victoria, an interior designer. The outside was chocolate brown, yellow and green and every room had exposed beams and concrete block walls. "It was dated, but we could see the house had bones."

They returned home two years later – this time for good, with Victoria eight months pregnant – and double-glazed the chilly house, put in a central heating system and painted inside, room by room. By the time they got to the outside, sharpening it with white paint and a dark-stained trim, Victoria was up the ladder, eight months pregnant with daughter number two.

They then turned their attention to the steep overplanted section, spending many laborious hours chopping down huge pine trees and planting easy-care natives and succulents amid the existing peninsula boulders. They paved a barbecue area and built a children's playground on a terraced hillside. The mobile wooden sandpit with lockdown wheels was built by Victoria. "I'm not nearly as practical as my wife," says Dave.





DESIGN NOTE

Victoria chose deep blue pool tiles for the splashback, to break up the whiteness of the kitchen. As well as being very affordable, says Victoria, the pool tiles were small enough for their grid lines to add interest and they also tie back to the wider colour palette, particularly the blue of the adjoining snug.



THIS PAGE "There's always a vista from the kitchen bench," says Victoria, especially since they enlarged the window and removed an ugly extractor fan that used to block the views. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top right) The snug used to be "a terrible room we never used", but it's now a TV room and child-zone; the paper shade came from Unison Workspaces, in Christchurch; a toughened glass safety half-wall outside the double doors also allows for ventilation and a view; the snug walls are painted in About Colour 'Blueprint'. An oil painting by Victoria in the stairwell picks up the colours of the Italian urns. Victoria and Dave's bedroom can be glimpsed from the top of the stairs in the family living area.

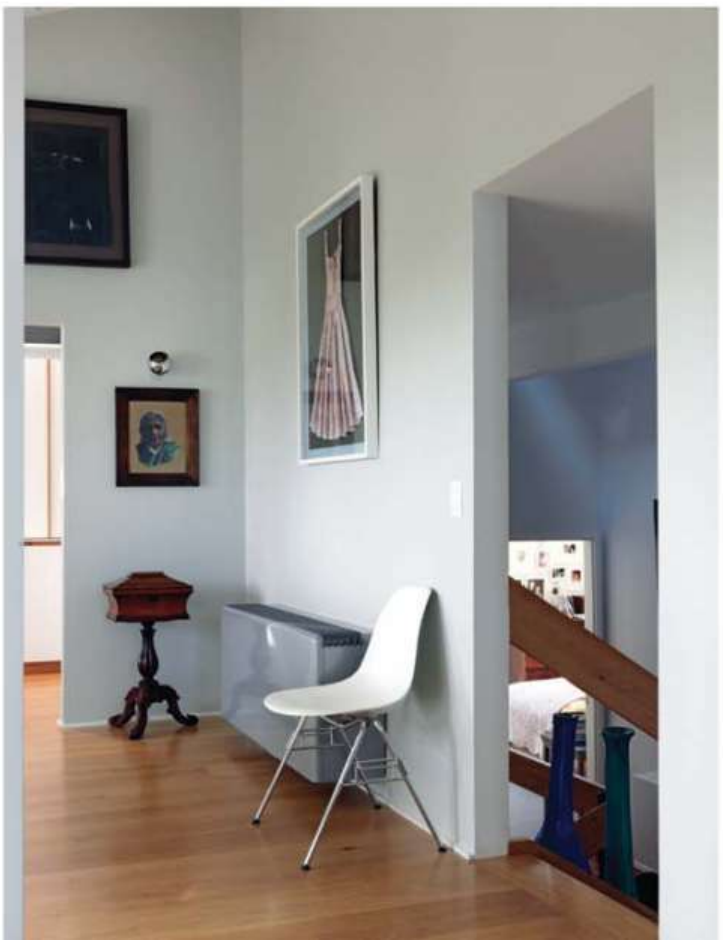
When the February 2011 earthquake struck (with Victoria eight months pregnant again), the windows blew out, the chimney imploded and the back wall came away, but the house was habitable. "We saw the earthquake repairs as an opportunity to finish off what we had started," says Dave. Post-quake renovations included gibbing inside and adding a deck and sliding doors off the living room.

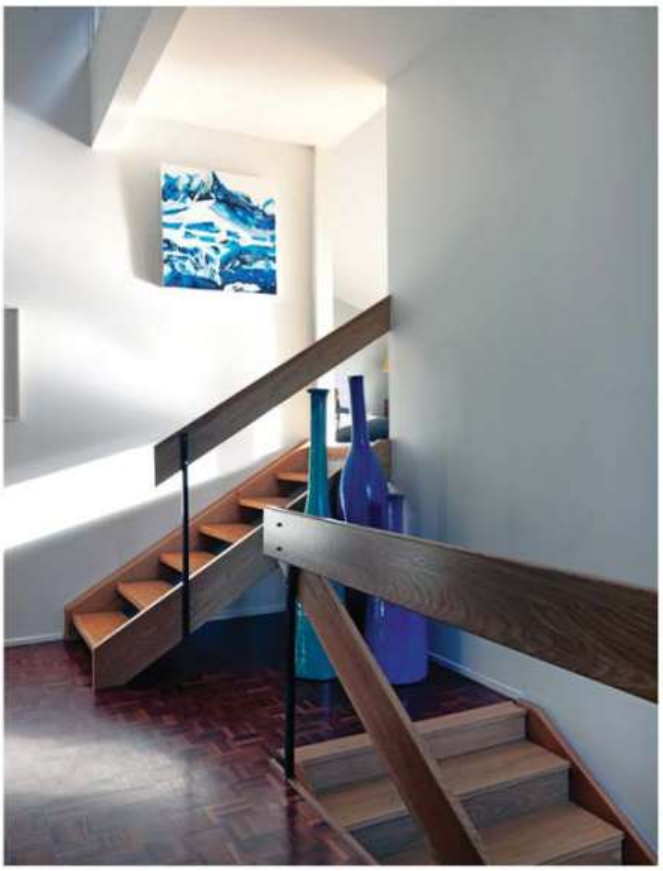
The Gibbons' three daughters – Amelia, nine, Audrey, seven, and Ottilie, four – have since been joined by Dave's "son" Timmy, a black and white spoodle who has added a whole new dimension to the family, says Victoria. "He doesn't smell, he doesn't shed and we just love him."

Victoria, who runs her interior design business, Halliburton Gibbons, from home, says she steers clear of "cookie-cutter" styles and likes to mix things up: a Verner Panton chandelier over the antique kitchen table, a cut-out paper light next door in the snug. Several of the paintings on the walls are her own.

While in London, Victoria completed a degree in fine arts and interior architecture through American InterContinental University and afterwards worked for an interior design firm, Carden Cunietti. "It was a small company, but they had amazing projects and the ability to work across Europe and in the US. They were very influential on my design now. >













Q&A

MY DECORATING STYLE IS: Eclectic, mixing old with new pieces so a house never feels stark and soulless. (*Victoria*)

BEST DECORATING TIP: Put fun wallpaper on the ceiling. It can help with proportioning a room too. (*Victoria*)

RENOVATION LOW POINT: Painting the inside of the house as enthusiastic first-time homeowners – in the evenings in winter with no heating – and coming back the next day to see the paint had peeled in the cold. (*Both*)

WHAT CAUSED THE MOST DEBATE: Which of us did the most DIY. (*Both*)

FAVOURITE FAMILY TREASURE: My wooden teapoy (see page 67). It contains my great-grandfather's leather notebooks (he was a confectioner), with elegant handwritten recipes. (*Victoria*)

BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE: The sofa in the snug, snuggling up to watch TV, with wonderful views of the city lights at night. (*Both*)

THIS WEEKEND WE WILL BE: Going to our bach at Castle Hill. We go there every weekend in winter and the whole family skis at Mt Cheeseman. (*Both*)

Victoria and Dave Gibbons



THIS PAGE The elevated kitchen/living wing is at right, with the double "doors" of the snug above the carport; Victoria and Dave stained the house themselves and recently had the drive sealed, paving the way for rollerblading and bike riding.
OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Amelia and Audrey share a room with a candy-striped ceiling: "It brings the ceiling down a bit, but has the effect of widening the room," says Victoria. Victoria redesigned the bathroom so it had access to both the hall and master bedroom: "It took me hours nutting it out so it had a bath, shower and toilet." A Tolomeo table lamp is perched on the bedside table in the master bedroom, with its colourful, patterned bedding from Kip & Co.

"My aim is to make a home feel comfortable. You shouldn't walk into a house and think, 'Where do I sit?'"

A pair of B&B Italia charcoal wool sofas, purchased not by Victoria but by Dave, look particularly inviting. "Dave is clever," says Victoria. "At night, after I go to bed, he pours himself a red wine, gets on the internet and buys pieces at auctions overseas." Dave, an accountant, modestly says it's more about "an eye for a deal" than a flair for interiors.

Dave's "son" may not smell or shed, but he has eaten half the upholstered side off one of the sofas. "He did it one rainy day," says Victoria. "He's actually done it beautifully, seam to seam."

Timmy, who can be half seen through a peephole, busy deconstructing a pick-up sticks container, hears his name, hurtles into full view and bounds onto the coffee table. Within seconds he has a pen in his mouth and the interview is over. ■







AUCKLAND Dawsons Furniture | TAURANGA Living Quarters | HAMILTON The Design Depot | NEW PLYMOUTH Cleggs Furniture | HASTINGS Hutchinson's | CHRISTCHURCH McKenzie & Willis | TIMARU McKenzie & Willis | DUNEDIN McKenzie & Willis | QUEENSTOWN McKenzie & Willis | WANAKA McKenzie & Willis



THIS PAGE At Elaine Yap and Matt Taylor's Grey Lynn, Auckland villa, Elaine observes her family tradition of hanging a lantern above the front door at Chinese New Year: "I grew up with this tradition and I want to continue it here for my family, so [daughters] Aiko and Anya are grounded in both cultures. I like the look of it so I tend to leave ours up for a while afterwards."
OPPOSITE The transparent glass balustrade fosters the illusion of a generous-sized hallway; says Matt: "The glass wasn't in the original plan but after the hole for the stairs was cut we realised a solid wall would close the area in too much; the glass turned out to be an elegant solution."



A BIT OF A CHARACTER

A *tired Auckland villa* sheds its limitations to emerge as a *modern original*

WORDS **LEANNE MOORE** / PHOTOGRAPHS **HELEN BANKERS**

CREDIT: PRODUCER/LEANNE MOORE/CAVE







It was devotion at first sight when, 14 years ago, Elaine Yap and husband Matt Taylor saw the tired, century-old Auckland villa that was to become home to them and their daughters Aiko, nine, and Anya, six.

It was clear that the house, centrally located on Grey Lynn's sunny northern slopes, needed a top-to-tail renovation, but that was part of its attraction. "We liked the fact it hadn't been mucked around with too much and still had a lot of its original features," says Elaine. "The floorboards, architraves, skirting boards and the grand fireplace were all intact."

But it was an attraction not shared by Elaine's Malaysian parents. "When my dad first came to see the house he asked when the carpet was arriving and I said, 'It's not'. Then he wanted to know when we were knocking it down and rebuilding. He couldn't understand our enthusiasm for something that was so old." >



THIS PAGE The original fireplace was a big drawcard when Elaine and Matt bought the house and they still use it, even though they have central heating post-renovation: "It's so cosy sitting at the table enjoying a meal with the fire going."
OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Anya, left, and Aiko in the hallway, designed to draw the eye to the extensive glazing at the back of the house, with a central gas fireplace, and the view beyond. A pretty blue trolley displays some of the treasures Elaine has discovered at junk shops and markets here and overseas. The large (1.7m x 1.3m) framed vintage poster in the living room was discovered online: "That is the only wall in the house that's big enough to take it," says Matt; the crocheted rug over the back of the sofa is Elaine's own handiwork.





THIS PAGE (clockwise from far left) Anya in the open-plan living/kitchen area, positioned on the sunny side of the house: "We spend a lot of time in the living area and kitchen, mainly because it is light and warm and looks out to the backyard," says Elaine. Corner shelving displays some of Elaine's collected treasures. Elaine Yap in the kitchen. The kitchen's island bench offers plenty of space for guests to gather.
OPPOSITE Elaine stores items she uses infrequently on the top shelf of the floor-to-ceiling cupboards above the oven and fridge: "When we do need to access something, Matt gets up on the kitchen bench and gets it down because he's taller than me."





"VILLAS HAVE CHARACTER THAT FORMULAIC MODERN HOUSES DON'T HAVE"

But Matt, who lived in villas as a student, had not considered anything else when it came to buying his first home: "Villas have character that formulaic modern houses don't have."

Although most of the house needed work, the couple had been given a head start – a fully renovated bathroom, featuring gleaming white subway tiles and smart cedar shutters.

The previous owners had completed this one room before abandoning the renovation project for a career opportunity overseas. "The bathroom had the wow factor," says Elaine. "We haven't done a thing to it since we moved in."

The rest of the house was liveable and the family settled in for six years before their renovation, becoming familiar with the drawbacks of an old villa – good heating and masses of built-in storage were high on their makeover wish list.

By 2007, they also needed more space. Aiko was two and the couple, who met as students at medical school, were planning to have another baby. With busy careers as medical specialists, Elaine and Matt did not want to manage the renovation project themselves. "We appreciate good design but that's not where our skills are," says Matt. >



DESIGN NOTE

The couple told architect Andrew Meiring they wanted a high kitchen ceiling to match the scale of the rest of the house, rather than the more usual low, lean-to villa kitchen. The dark cabinets stretching to the ceiling emphasise that height.



THIS PAGE (clockwise from top) The master bedroom at the front of the house gets plenty of natural light from the villa's bay window; the birdcage in the hall is from Freedom and the lithograph above it is by Dutch artist Jasper Krabbé; the chair is an old favourite, bought by Elaine when she was a student. A new lower level was excavated in the renovation, taking advantage of the villa's sloping site; the space was developed into a bathroom and a bedroom each for Aiko (front) and Anya, but the girls like to share a room so the other bedroom is used for guests. Elaine made the fairy tree when Aiko was a baby and has added more fairies over the years to mark important events.
OPPOSITE A high-quality bathroom renovation by the previous owners set the tone for the rest of the house.



There was just one candidate for the job: Auckland architect Andrew Meiring. The couple met him years ago when they bought furniture from his Ponsonby furniture store Design Emporium (since closed). "We knew we liked his style and he did a great job with the house," says Matt. "I wouldn't change a thing."

Andrew's redesign added space and light. Excavation under the house made room for two bedrooms and a bathroom without extending the home's footprint. The upstairs was opened up to create a roomy kitchen and open-plan living/dining area and a wall of glass now opens onto a deck overlooking the garden.

The modern gas fireplace that anchors all that glass was Andrew's idea. "It doesn't get used very often but we love it," says Elaine. "It serves more of a cosmetic function, drawing your eye right through the house when you walk in the front door. We still use the original fireplace in the dining room because we love the cosy feel it gives. We have central heating too, which is great." >







"I LIKE COLLECTING QUIRKY THINGS AND THIS IS THE PERFECT BACKDROP FOR DISPLAYING THEM"



The pair have been surprised at just how warm the house is since the renovation. "I wanted Andrew to put underfloor heating in the downstairs bathroom but he said we wouldn't need it and he was right," says Elaine.

When it came to decor, Elaine kept it simple, with white walls and polished timber flooring. "I like collecting quirky things and this is the perfect backdrop for displaying them."

Elaine has a passion for turning trash into treasure and constantly visits junk and thrift shops in search of new treasures. Her eagle eye even extends to roadside discoveries: "Sometimes, when we're out driving, I see things people have thrown out. I make Matt get out of the car to pick them up!"

"I like the excitement of finding things that no one else has," says Elaine. "I get a sense of satisfaction from repurposing something that's been abandoned. When I see something I like, I always know exactly where I'm going to put it."

Seven years after they renovated, the pair are still rapt with the result. "We got everything we wanted and it came in on time and on budget," says Matt. Adds Elaine: "Our brief was to retain the look and feel of the villa while transforming it into a modern family home. The renovation has given us that and it's also a home that truly feels like ours."

Even her parents have been won over. The couple, who moved to New Zealand when Elaine was a teenager, have since returned to live in Malaysia but they come back frequently to visit. "Both my mum and dad love the house now!" ■

THIS PAGE (from top) This woven swing chair, suspended from the upper deck, is a popular garden reading spot for bookworms Aiko and Anya; the downstairs bedrooms both have direct garden access. During the renovation a glass balustrade was added to maximise the view.
OPPOSITE Aiko and Anya on the verandah at the front of the house, where mondo grass has been mass-planted as a contrast to the villa's white-on-white exterior scheme.



Q&A

BEST DECORATING TIP: Collect things over time. I like to move things around, which usually coincides with the seasons.

BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE: We all spend a lot of time in the living area and kitchen, mainly because it is light and warm.

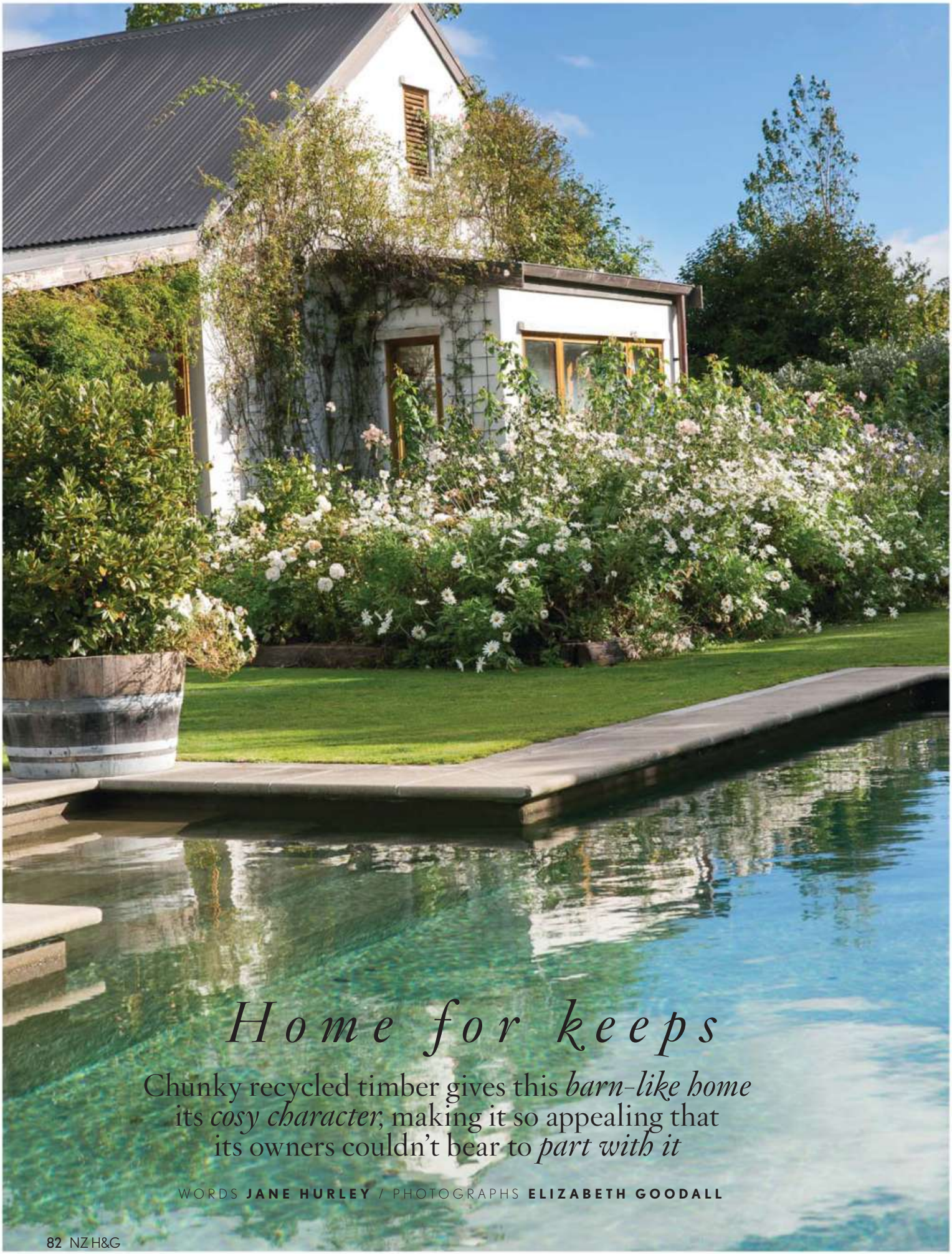
ADVICE FOR OTHER RENOVATORS: Have a project manager to keep track of cost, time and coordinating subcontractors. In fact, we think it saved us money in the long run because everything just ran to schedule.

FINDING THE BEST SECOND-HAND BARGAINS: I'm always on the lookout for junk shops, especially on road trips out of town. When I have an overseas trip coming up, I make a list of local markets or second-hand shops that I can nip into.

TIP FOR STAYING SANE DURING A LONG RENOVATION: Move out if you can afford it, especially if you have young children. We rented nearby.

Elaine Yap





Home for keeps

Chunky recycled timber gives this *barn-like home* its *cosy character*, making it so appealing that its owners couldn't bear to *part with it*

WORDS **JANE HURLEY** / PHOTOGRAPHS **ELIZABETH GOODALL**



THIS PAGE This view of Susie Jamieson and Richard Worley's Martinborough home looks from the entrance courtyard to the verandah, which Susie sweeps with an old straw broom; white wisteria softens the pergola made from recycled transmission poles; Susie grows her citrus trees in old half wine barrels.
OPPOSITE Looking from the pool towards the window of the master bedroom, surrounded by a mass of 'Sally Holmes' roses, salvias and white daisies.









THIS PAGE (clockwise from top left) Richard shot the mallards on the farm he manages; the black and white cushions from Susie's range are waterproof and fadeproof. The decorative wall of wooden offcuts was designed by Richard to soften the architecture (though Susie confesses to sneaking a piece now and then for the fire). Susie found the 19th-century French Baltic pine cobbler's trolley at Country Trader in Greytown. The antique French chest of drawers came from Emporos, also in Greytown. **OPPOSITE** (from top) Richard working in the 22m-long living space; to his right is the wood store hatch. The picture of prize pigs above the fireplace is an old family piece, reputedly by George Morland, but it may be "school of".





Susie Jamieson and Richard Worley's massive 22m-long living room, with its huge jarrah beams and vaulted wooden ceiling, might just be the cosiest barn in Martinborough. At its heart is a fireplace of gargantuan proportions ("It's based on a Scottish castle fire," explains Richard), which burns day and night during the winter. In the wall right next to it, just above the wood basket, is a small door that leads into the wood store next door. On a frosty Martinborough night, when the temperature dips below toasty, you can hop next door, chuck a log or two through the hatch, and it will land exactly where you need it, no lugging required.

Kilims and Persian rugs in faded terracottas soften the floors and leather armchairs and the glow of patinated wood is everywhere, from the handful of precious family antiques to the rustic stools and diminutive chairs that Susie loves to collect for the couple's seven grandchildren to perch on. >



THIS PAGE Richard designed the simple kitchen in which frequently used equipment hangs from a meat rail on the far wall; the matai dining table was made by furniture-maker Todd O'Hagan and the French ladderback chairs came from Antiquities in Carterton. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) 'Iceberg' roses from the garden on the demolition matai bench. Enamel containers flank one of 22 birds (this one's an egg-holder) that Susie has picked up over the years: "It's like an aviary in here," says Richard. The porcelain sink and all the other tapware came from In Residence in Auckland; the sliding kitchen windows, designed by Richard, open up to a bench on the verandah side. The couple found their old beech chopping block behind a shop in Christchurch, "just leaning against the wall", so they bought it and had a base made.







"AS IT CAME TO FRUITION, I THOUGHT, WE CAN'T SELL THIS. IT'S A BIT SPECIAL"



On an icy winter night, you might never want to leave. But then Richard spent 20 years farming south of Castlepoint on the Wairarapa coast ("Where wind was invented," he says) and Susie was brought up on a high country station in Otago. They both know warm, welcoming and downright practical when they see it.

Both Susie and Richard have been married previously and they have five children between them (in fact, three of their daughters celebrated their weddings in this house). Susie has been running her business, Susie's Bags (susiesbags.co.nz), for 25 years, designing a range of practical bags and picnic gear and selling them online. Richard left farming for a time and set up an export business selling deer antlers into Asia before, in 1997, becoming involved in the development of the Martinborough Estate with a friend. "Neither of us had any experience in what we were doing – he was a banker and I was a farmer," says Richard.

In 2003, one of the houses Richard was building was this one. "As it came to fruition, I thought, I can't do it. We can't sell this. It's a bit special."

For one thing, he says, "it's built of material that you can't just go out and buy". Richard was trading in recycled timber at the time and he lavished his precious stores on this project. >











THIS PAGE The main bedroom in the guest wing, built so that family can be self-sufficient when they come to stay, looks out to the swimming pool; Susie made the curtains from ticking.
OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left) Richard designed the house around some of the couple's old family pieces, such as his grandmother's long-case clock. Looking from the guest bedroom into the huge bathroom; the antique balloon-back chair originally belonged to Susie's mother: "I've always been meaning to re-cover it." Rustic bunk beds in the guest wing, built by Richard's son and two sons-in-law. The cast-iron bath in the large bathroom, rescued from a demolition site and re-enamelled, needed six men to lift into place; Richard sited the bath first then built the bathroom walls around it; furniture-maker Todd O'Hagan built the twin-basin sink unit from recycled matai and, though the couple chose aluminium windows "for budget and practicality", they are spruced up with cedar edging.

The mighty jarrah beams (each one weighing nearly a tonne) were originally brought from Australia as ship's ballast. The timber, he says, was simply tossed onto the wharves in piles until somebody had the bright idea of building with it. The rest of the ceiling is macrocarpa, "from trees that we milled, sorted out the boards and dried". As for the wide matai floorboards, they came from the roof of the old Masterton YMCA. "That's part of the Wairarapa – something turned over and sanded and put back."

For another thing, there's no front door. You step from the entry courtyard into a shady, wide-eaved verandah with wooden bifold doors that open directly onto the main room. "I've always been interested in architecture," says Richard, who designed the home. "So this house is a lot of bits of other people's houses, whether it's a villa in Italy or France or a beach house in the Sounds or a mountain hut." As for the plain, barn-like design: "I guess that's our farming heritage coming through. But it's also the way architecture was originally. You built with stone and you cut down trees and slab wood to make roofs, whether you were in 1840 in New Zealand or 300 years ago in France. It's a very lasting architecture."

These days, you can swap the stone walls for insulated concrete breeze blocks and you're away. It is, says Richard, an inexpensive but permanent way to build. And then – well, at least if you're Susie and Richard – you can fill your inexpensive structure with some very special things. Such as the Georgian grandfather clock that belonged to Richard's grandmother, with enamelled flowers on its face, or the rustic tools and paraphernalia that Susie loves to gather. >



THIS PAGE (from top) Susie and Richard at the outdoor table where Susie sometimes sews the woollen picnic rugs she sells. Bay trees in half barrels edge the swimming pool.
OPPOSITE (from top) A monarch butterfly perches on a salvia spire. The garden wall is clad in white clematis with daisies in the foreground.

The matai kitchen bench and rough-hewn table had a previous life as a "munitions floor in the naval base at Devonport. It's got a great patina. You can tip a glass of wine on it and it's not going to hurt it." The bolt head holes on the table fill up with crumbs, says Richard, and the fantails fly in and eat them.

In summer, Susie's lovingly tended garden of blue and white and "the odd peachy colour" comes into its own. Susie sits outside, surrounded by more than 100 'Sally Holmes' roses, and sews her picnic rugs under the umbrella. When the scorch factor gets too high, she plunges into the pool. "I dive in and swim 10 lengths, get out and back into the job again. It's a good life."

And it keeps them busy. Neither Richard nor Susie likes to be rattling around with nothing to do. Says Richard: "There's enough time at the end to rest!" ■







Q&A

WE LOVE THIS PART OF NEW ZEALAND BECAUSE: It has mild winters and hot summers. (*Richard*)

THE BEST MONEY WE EVER SPENT WAS ON: Collecting the hardwood beams and recycled matai floorboards. (*Richard*)

PROUDEST DIY ACHIEVEMENT: Designing the house. (*Richard*)

IF THERE WAS ONE THING WE'D DO DIFFERENTLY: Provide more natural light in the kitchen/sitting room area. (*Susie*)

THE FIRST THING I DO WHEN I GET HOME FROM WORK: In the summer, I have a swim. (*Richard*)

FLOWERS I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT: Roses, salvia and daisies. (*Susie*)

A QUOTE I OFTEN USE: Whatever you do, do it once and do it properly. (*Richard*)

A WELL-KEPT SECRET ABOUT THIS AREA: Palliser Estate pinot noir. (*Richard*)

FAVOURITE LOCAL RESTAURANT: We enjoy going to Circus Cinema for a movie and a meal. (*Susie*)

BEST TIME TO VISIT: November – wine festival time. (*Richard*)

Susie Jamieson and Richard Worley



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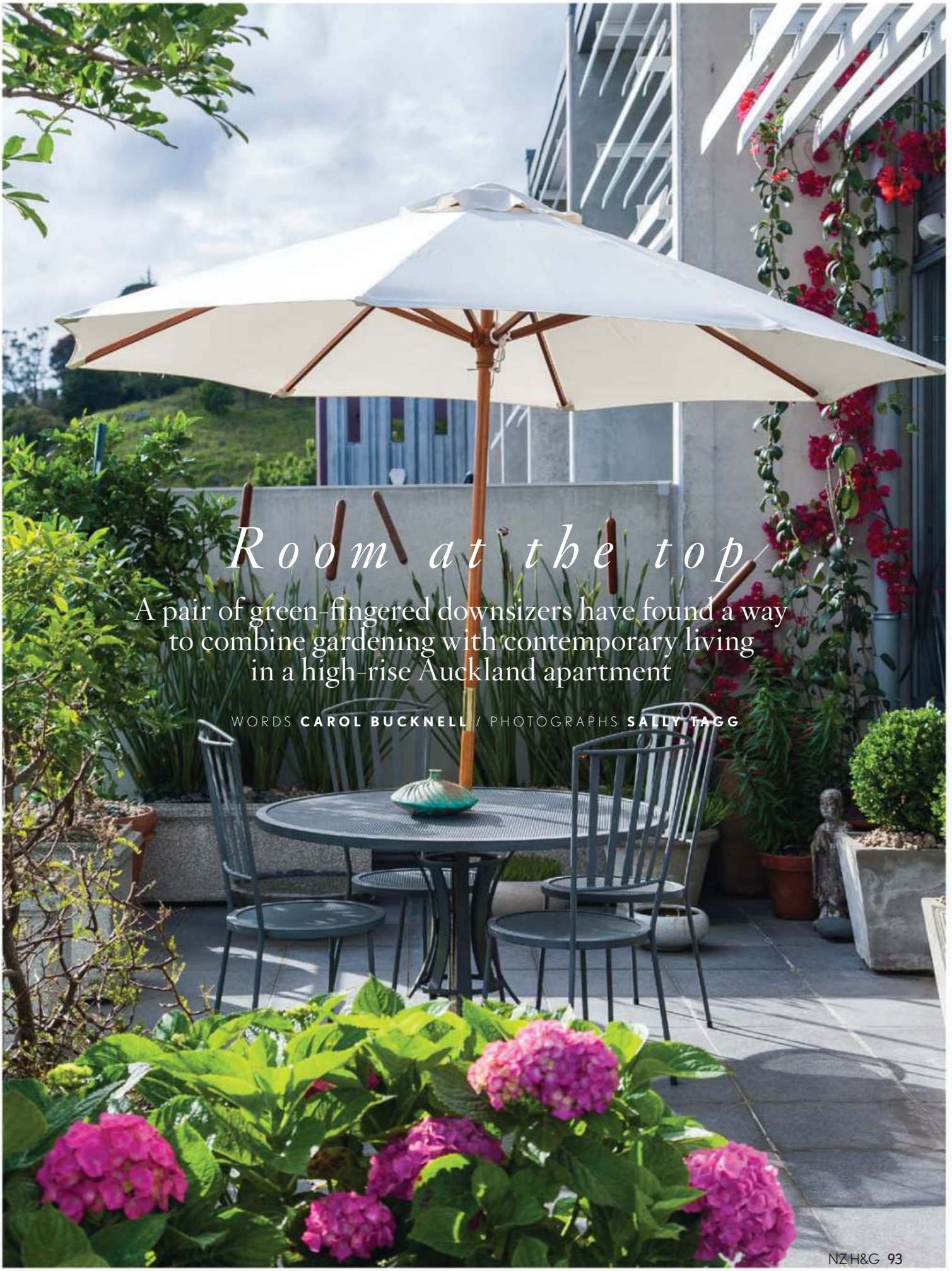
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THIS PAGE At Joanna and Mark Hamilton's inner-city Auckland apartment, standard bays screen the vegetable area on the west side of the balcony from the main outdoor living area; Mark grows a range of crops in pots, including tomatoes, lettuces, beans and herbs, and Joanna plants flowers nearby to attract bees.
OPPOSITE Both sides of the balcony can be accessed from the open internal living spaces through large glass doors; here, on the eastern side, is a small table and chairs for breakfasts and coffee in the morning sun; *Bougainvillea* 'Scarlett O'Hara' provides bold colour by the door.



Room at the top

A pair of green-fingered downsizers have found a way to combine gardening with contemporary living in a high-rise Auckland apartment

WORDS **CAROL BUCKNELL** / PHOTOGRAPHS **SALLY TAGG**

THIS PAGE (clockwise from above) The western side of the balcony receives all-day sun and it is here the couple like to entertain and enjoy the views and sunsets; a griselinia hedge (at rear) screens the wind. Joanna Hamilton. The vegetable area is protected from south-west winds by a low north-facing wall. A Woolly Pockets vertical planting system is ideal for strawberries; the catmint below brings bees into the garden.
OPPOSITE (from top) Hydrangeas thrive on the balcony, despite the strong winds; the Butterfly chairs are from Alfresco. Looking through to the east side of the balcony; the living area is furnished with Hans Wegner armchairs bought in Sydney; the coffee table is from Indice and the floor lamp is Artemide's Tolomeo Mega Terra.







A PERSIAN GARDEN HIGH above the rooftops of inner-city Auckland might seem a rather strange dichotomy but on Joanna and Mark Hamilton's balcony the concept really works. The densely planted space is filled with potted trees, flowers, vegetables and herbs, their colours and scents creating the feel of an exotic urban oasis.

Joanna, a landscape designer, says the key elements of perfume, refuge, water and enclosure are what she likes about the Persian style, regarded as one of the earliest forms of designed garden. "The garden is our retreat from work pressures and busy city life. For perfume I've planted frangipani, citrus and white-flowering Madagascar jasmine. The heat comes off the concrete walls, making the citrus trees release scented oil from their leaves and fragrance from the flowers. Persian gardens always have water, which is vital to life, and I use it here in a bowl by [Hawke's Bay artist] Emma Stone. The griselinia hedges, standard bays and other potted trees provide shelter."

When Joanna and Mark bought their corner apartment, one of its chief attractions were the wide balconies that wrap around its western and eastern sides. "But it can be windy up here so I have planted a lot of screening. One of my large potted trees blew over recently – a rare specimen *Schrebera alata* from Africa, brought here from my previous garden." >







THIS PAGE The dining table and chairs (Vitra from Cite) were the only new pieces of furniture bought for the apartment; Joanna's mother Joan Holderness painted the still life on the kitchen wall.
OPPOSITE (clockwise from right top) The painting in the main bedroom is by A Elizabeth Kelly, an early-mid 20th century New Zealand artist. Also in the bedroom is a painting by Ray Wilkinson, along with various bowls from the Auckland Potters Association annual sale. The piupiu in the glass case is by Northland artist Dotty Hohepa and the Buddha head is from a museum shop in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Alongside the staircase to the upper-level bedroom and office is a collection centred on an Eames bird .



Like his wife, Mark is a keen gardener and wanted to grow vegetables and herbs, choosing the western side of the building for his thriving kitchen garden, all planted in pots. Jo created her Persian garden on the eastern end of the balcony and the couple often use this area for breakfasts in the morning sun.

The space between is their outdoor entertaining area and here Joanna's planting is quite unexpected. Pink hydrangeas, roses and other flowering plants thrive despite the wind, creating a soft, romantic feel that contrasts vividly with the urban scene beyond.

Though Joanna has preferred to leave the vege gardening to Mark, her own interest has grown since many of her clients began requesting companion planting and bee-friendly plants for their kitchen gardens and potagers. "I try to grow bee attractants here, such as perennial geraniums, limonium, calendula and alyssum. Alyssum is a great thing; it has a lovely sweet perfume.

"Funnily enough we have a preponderance of bumble-bees up here. I'm thinking about getting a bumble-bee house after I saw an item about them in *NZ Gardener* magazine. Apparently they are more effective pollinators than honey bees. They don't have a hive; they live in nests underground."

The couple have lived in their two-level apartment for five years after moving from a large family home in the leafy eastern suburbs. Although an apartment was not initially on the agenda they decided to buy this one not just for its large outdoor spaces but also for the solidity and quality of its architecture.

"It was built in 2006, when there were many leaky buildings, and we knew the work of the architect, Kerry Avery of Avery Team Architects. Mark has an engineering background and he was impressed with the fact it was built of concrete and steel." >









THIS PAGE (from top) Greenery marks out the glass-walled balconies of the Hamiltons' two-level Mt Eden apartment; designed by Kerry Avery, the building has views across the city and to the Waitakeres. Joanna with a Poor Knights lily.

Q&A

FAVOURITE NEW FIND: After saying I would get rid of all my roses I have been foolish and just bought two new roses, a 'Graham Thomas' and a new David Austin.

FLOWERS I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT IN THE GARDEN: My collection of deep red pelargoniums.

FAVOURITE OUTDOOR SPOT: Very much sun and wind-driven. The great thing about having a corner apartment is we can choose.

FAVOURITE HOUSEHOLD CHORE: Cooking. For years I only cooked family meals then recently I got into it, although I still need a recipe. I enjoy having people around for informal meals.

BEST WALK IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD: I walk nearly every day, either up Mt Eden or to the Domain.

BEST PLACE FOR COFFEE: The Bloc on Normanby Road has great homewares and a cafe.

FAVOURITE LOCAL SHOP: Time Out Bookstore in Mt Eden.

Joanna Hamilton



"We love living here. We had always lived on the east side of Auckland so we really enjoy seeing the western sky over the Waitakere ranges. Being elevated means it's great at night and you get the sunsets. It's also very sunny, being a modern space."

Floor to ceiling glass doors on both sides of the living space open to the balcony, enhancing the sense of space. Most of the furniture came from their previous home yet the mix of mid-century, contemporary and traditional pieces looks as if it was chosen specifically for the apartment. Well-stacked bookcases, paintings and other decorative objects gathered over the years are on display throughout the interior.

"We have always previously lived in old houses and, much as I still love them, I also like being in a contemporary space," says Joanna. "I have eclectic taste when it comes to furniture and art and this kind of space is good for that. It's a very positive environment to be in; it's always warm and inviting. And it's also very easy to look after." ■



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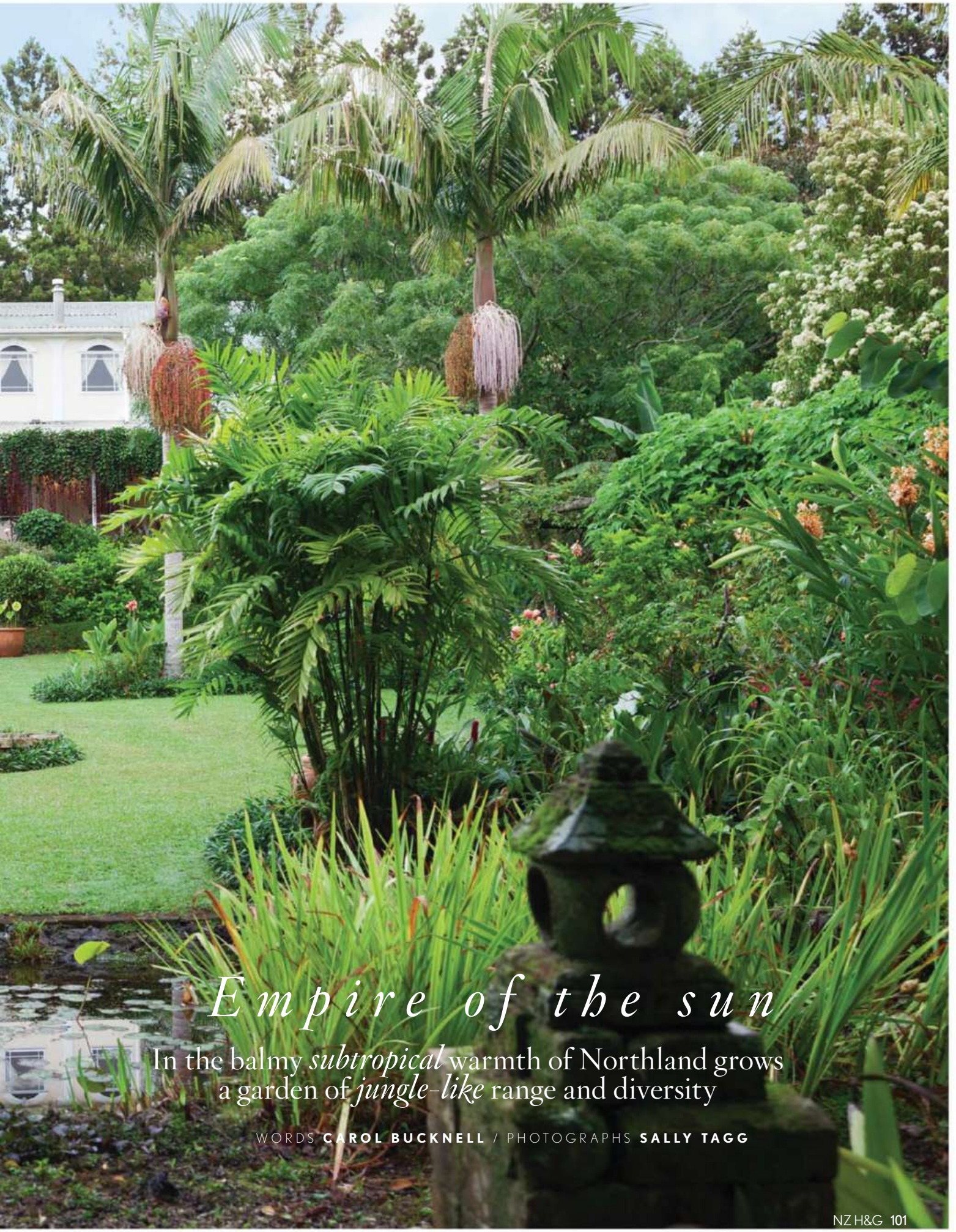
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Answering questions you didn't know to ask



THESE PAGES Gillian Burrough designed her Kerikeri garden around a strong central axis from the verandah of her north-facing house across a circular lawn to the oval water lily pond in the foreground; stately bangalow palms march through the middle of the garden and on either side of the lawn is a series of garden rooms planted with a rich variety of subtropical species, including many more palms, at least 10 different gingers, heliconia, roses, bauhinia, ligularia and cannas.



Empire of the sun

In the balmy *subtropical* warmth of Northland grows a garden of *jungle-like* range and diversity

WORDS **CAROL BUCKNELL** / PHOTOGRAPHS **SALLY TAGG**



Gillian Burrough first saw the jungle as a young child travelling through the Panama Canal on a ship with her family. It was love at first sight. She has been recreating her own private jungles ever since. "I was nine years old at the time," she recalls. "I remember standing on the ship and seeing all that jungle; smelling it. I was fascinated. So I began building jungles in our garden in California, where we were living then. I've continued to do so all my life."

Her most recent horticultural endeavour, a roughly 0.7ha garden in Northland, has many plants you'd find in the jungle. But the term doesn't come close to describing this exquisite garden, with its carefully planned axes and vistas, lush green lawn surrounded by a cornucopia of tropical plants, beautiful lotus and water lily ponds and so much more.

Developed over 17 years on a former tamarillo orchard just out of Kerikeri, it was inspired by the gardens of Britain and southern Asia, says Gillian. "Before coming here I spent time in tropical countries such as Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. I've always had a pull towards that part of world. I had a vision of somewhere in the highlands of southern Asia in about 1910. Most of the plants in the garden are from that region. And I love that period – its literature, clothes, Raffles, the Empire thing…"

Gillian's beautifully realised vision is clear the minute you step through the archway into her tranquil entry courtyard, with its moss-encrusted tiered bird bath, gardenias, bright cerise clerodendrum flowers and peacock blue blooms of *Thunbergia grandiflora*. Beyond the courtyard a circular pond filled with lotus entices you along a path that takes you to the back of the house. Here white rattan tables are laid for tea on the wide verandah. >









THESE PAGES (clockwise from above left) The upper terrace forms a cross axis between the house and the circular lawn at the bottom of the steps; in the foreground is a lotus pond. Decorative objects collected on Gillian's travels around southern Asia are carefully placed around the garden. Gillian serves afternoon tea on her verandah. Lotus flowers in a raised pond built by Gillian alongside the entrance to the garden.

THESE PAGES (clockwise from below) Dion, the neighbour's golden pheasant, considers Gillian's garden his personal domain. The white elephants flanking the steps down to the lawn were bought locally; a raised lily pond in the centre of the lawn draws the eye to the larger oval pond on its far side; on the far left, tucked into the greenery, is a small thatched structure designed to resemble those you find in rice paddies in Indonesia. Gillian calls the Indian clock vine (*Thunbergia mysorensis*) draped over the verandah her "bead curtain".







You almost expect to find a character from a Somerset Maugham novel lounging on the chairs but instead it's Dion the golden pheasant, his brilliant turquoise, gold and scarlet plumage and regal bearing the perfect foil for his tropical surroundings. Although he belongs to a neighbour he spends most of his time in the garden, says Gillian. "I named him Dion because all the Dions I have known were very good-looking but just a bit full of themselves."

As we journey through the densely planted garden we encounter several more inhabitants, including an adopted stray cat, several rescue bantams, a field mouse and a rabbit, all of



whom like to follow Gillian around when she's outside. Birds and insects abound here too; the air is filled with bees, butterflies and dragonflies irresistibly drawn to the datura, backhousia, sedum and many other insect-attracting plants in the garden. Even the dreaded paper wasps have their place, she feels.

"I try not to kill anything. I'm probably the only gardener you know who rescues snails. The only things I admit to killing are rats, when I had a glut of them."

Unwanted plants are also treated with compassion. Those that are "too naughty in the main garden, I plant in my wild garden, where they can go nuts. If things were too immaculate, insects wouldn't come. As well as all the birds and insects, I have frogs and skinks here now and would really love to have toads."

Despite her free-spirited approach, Gillian believes in the importance of a strong structure. She designed the house and garden together, connecting the two with strong sight lines and clearly defined circulation routes. "I paced it all out and spent hours in the bath with a notebook and pencil. I'm still constantly thinking about it. My priority when I started was the verandah. I designed the house around it. I wanted a vista from the verandah and a central axis from the staircase inside the house continuing down through to the lawn and the lily pond at the far end." >



THIS PAGE (clockwise from left) Gillian used salvaged bricks to build this wall near the oval lily pond and many others around the garden. A Balinese Buddha watches over the turtle pond. Cerise clerodendrum flowers surround a bird bath planted with irises in the entrance courtyard. Tropical water lilies.
OPPOSITE A shady path planted with schefflera, ficus and other large-leaved subtropical trees is lined with drifts of bromeliads (most rescued from rubbish heaps), heliconia and ginger.

Around both sides of the lawn she created a series of garden rooms designed to showcase either a particular colour or a style of planting. There's one with white-flowering plants that she calls the temple garden, a potager, a secret garden, an orchard, a wild garden and, along the side of the house, a golden-themed garden planted with datura, flaxes, roses, hibiscus and ginger: "Everything from cream to almost red. I love playing with colours. Plants don't fight with each other when grouped together in the same colour family."

Gillian does most of the work in the garden herself, even difficult projects such as the raised circular lotus pond that she built last winter. "I am too stingy to pay someone else to do it. But it was hard work, as the soil is clay."

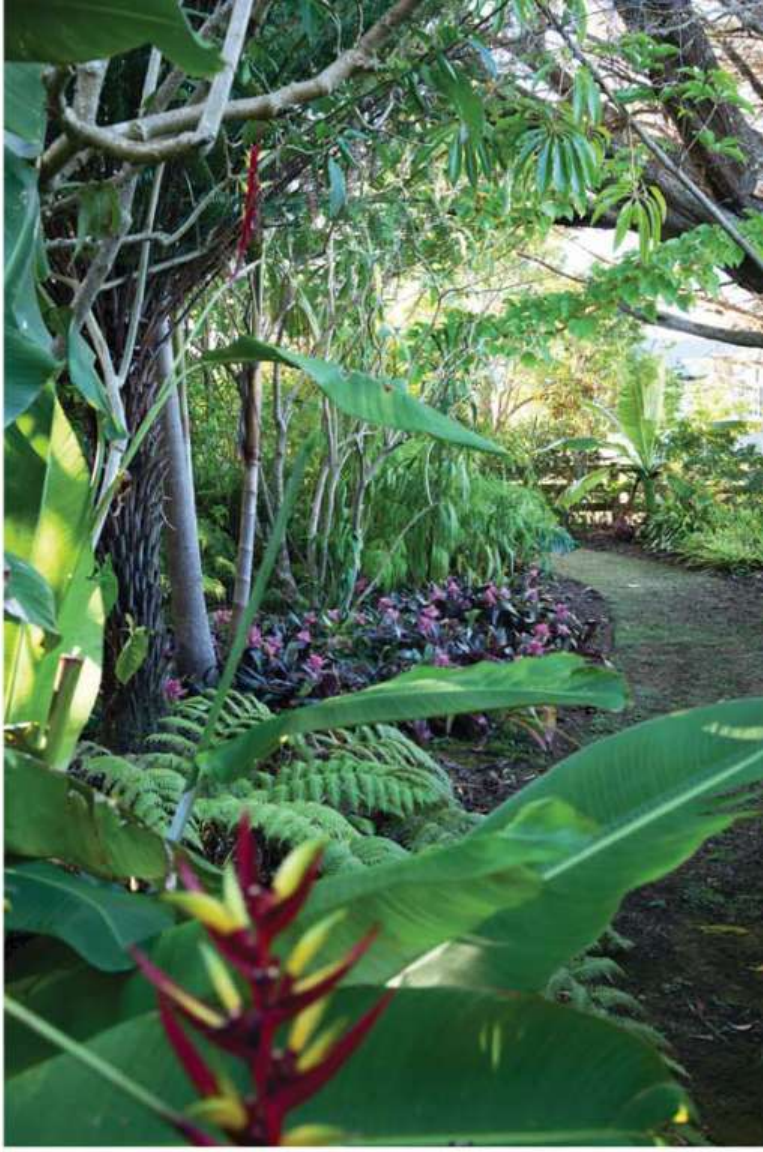
She is also an accomplished scavenger, gathering discarded plants from compost heaps and hard landscaping materials wherever she can find them to build paths, ponds and walls. Old bricks are a particular favourite: "No brick is safe from me."

Her current project is a T-shaped pond for her recently rescued turtles, christened Ruby Jane and Jemima because they came from the Mississippi Valley. "I am full of plans. That's the really fun bit of developing new areas. I wake up in the middle of the night and think, what would be nice there…" ■









Q&A

I LOVE KERIKERI BECAUSE: I have everything from English snowdrops to frangipani growing here (the hottest bit of the country). I doubt there's anywhere else in the world you can do that.

TYPE OF GARDEN: Tropical, with a central lawn, several ponds and garden rooms. Planted beneath a canopy of palms, melia and other trees are bromeliads, gingers, heliconia and other jungle plants.

SOIL: Volcanic over clay subsoil.

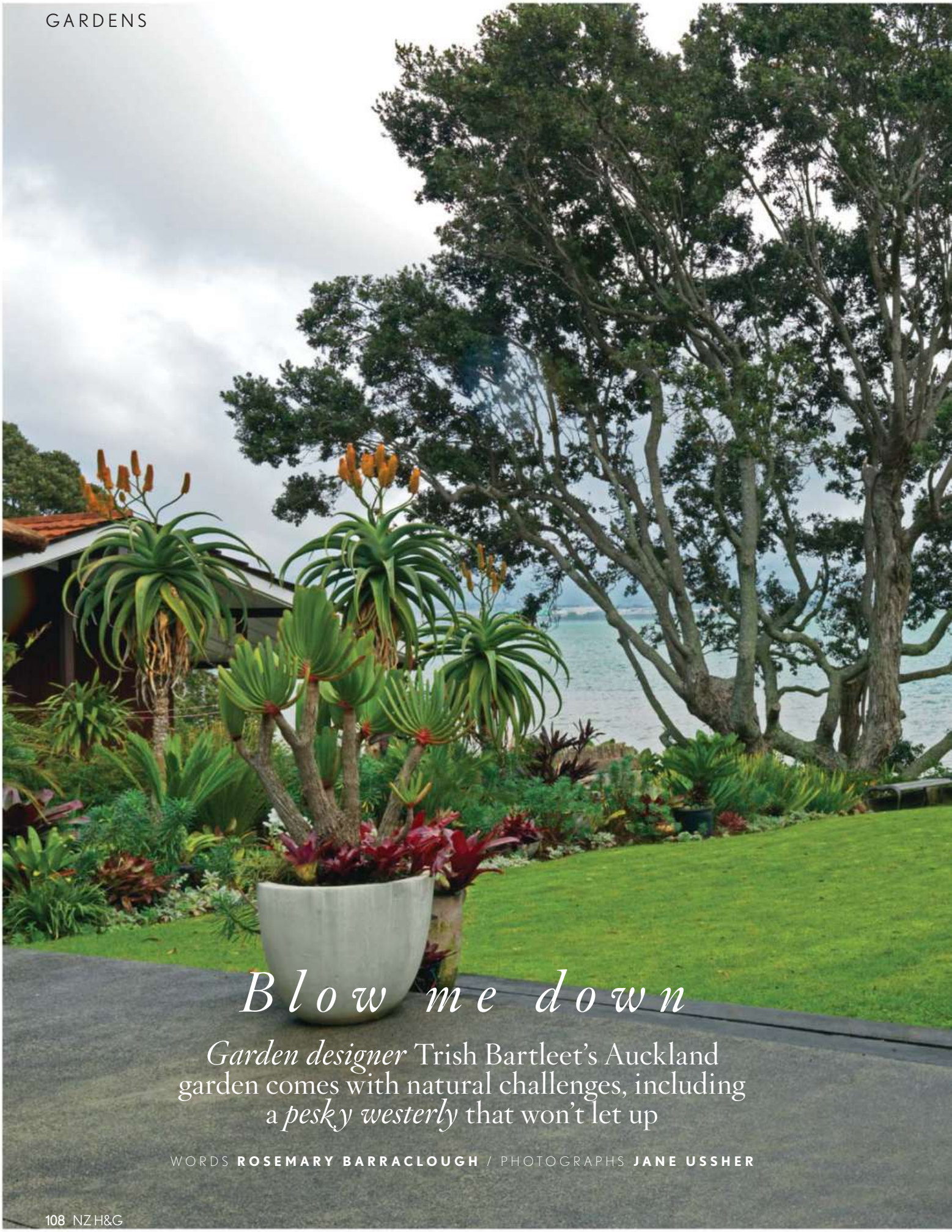
MAINTENANCE REGIME: It was difficult when I first started with the property being an ex-orchard. It's much easier now. I have to feed constantly, as the soil drains so well and leaches out nutrients. I feed every spring, mainly with chicken compost.

LIKES AND DISLIKES: I loathe different varieties of bromeliads mixed together. I much prefer to plant big groups of the same plant. And I like rearranging things. Every autumn I reorganise the garden. Some of my plants have been moved so many times they jump into the wheelbarrow when they see me coming.

MOST SIGNIFICANT PLANT: I love the trunks of the bangalow palms, with their seeds that turn screaming red and the soft lavender of their flowers. They look like hula skirts.

Gillian Burrough





Blow me down

Garden designer Trish Bartleet's Auckland garden comes with natural challenges, including a *pesky westerly* that won't let up

WORDS **ROSEMARY BARRACLOUGH** / PHOTOGRAPHS **JANE USSHER**



THESE PAGES Trish and Mal Bartleet's Pt Chevalier home overlooks Preston's Bay, on the upper Waitemata Harbour; Trish has replaced some of the cabbage trees over the years as she loves the strong Kiwi flavour they give the view when paired with the gnarly old pohutukawa.



THIS PAGE The border on the southern boundary was designed with a wave-like curve and features *Stachys byzantina* (lamb's ears), grey-hued succulents and *Aloe thraskii*, which Trish values for its striking yellow flowers. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) Trish Bartleet in front of the bromeliad-packed terraced garden built from rocks found on site. The Bartleets weren't keen on a fence, so they planted flax along the boundary, then added giant powder-coated aluminium pots for a spot of dramatic colour. Shell paths weave between the three levels of the terraced garden, allowing access to the garden. *Chamaerops humilis* (European fan palm), tillandsia and bromeliads. The red-centred bromeliad is *Nidularium fulgens*.

"Living here is like living in a boat… I live in a gale," says Auckland garden designer Trish Bartleet of her seaside Pt Chevalier garden, as she watches a bloke on a jet ski bouncing over the waves at the bottom of her garden.

When Trish and her architect husband Mal bought their narrow, steep section 21 years ago, they didn't realise how many plants that wild westerly would decimate. They did know, however, that they had their hands full with the site. Three architects had already visited, shaken their heads and walked away, deterred by access issues.

Mal and Trish were sure they could make it work. Mal was sick of villas (the couple were living with their three young children in Grey Lynn at the time). "He wanted to have the experience of building his own house; he wanted a home that was nice and new and warm."

In those days Pt Chev was still dirt cheap, says Trish. They picked up their tricky plot for a mere $135,000 and, on a tight budget, proceeded to build an "urban bach" on eight levels, with 38 steps from the entry to the ground floor living area. Tucking the house back into the cliff left room for a paved area and a decent-sized lawn: "We wanted a place to play, to party."

And, of course, room for a garden. But what is it they say about cobbler's children and shoes? It could be true of landscape designers and their own gardens. Trish never drew up the kind of fully fleshed-out plan she creates for clients. "It's an evolutionary garden and it's still evolving," she says. "I experiment in my own garden. If I see a plant I like, I try it and see how it goes."

She may not have had a carefully drawn plan, but Trish had a strategy in mind – define the boundaries with densely planted flax and add plants that would offer structure as she chipped away at bringing in colour and establishing the garden.

Testing times were ahead. First, the soil – there really wasn't any, just clay and rock. Trish had a flying fox built to whizz mountains of compost down from the road to the site. >













THIS PAGE (from top) Trish says pots are a useful garden design tool; they can be used to elevate plants, allow gardeners to grow plants that might not thrive in their soil and are useful for defining and dividing spaces; the white pot holds *Aloe plicatilis* and the red-toned *Neoregelia* 'Fireball'. The house features a central atrium with a balcony above; the tall plants are *Chamaedorea hooperiana* and *Acorus* 'Ogon' grows in the pond.
OPPOSITE Designed by Mal Bartleet, the house is tucked into the cliff and is on eight different levels; it is painted in Resene 'Gunmetal' and the umbrella is from Brustics.

Q&A

SOIL TYPE: Clay, unfortunately. I add fertiliser from my worm farm and endless bags of compost.

HOURS SPENT IN THE GARDEN: Often I have a big blitz just before the garden bag monthly collection is due! But I'm out there all the time, pulling out weeds. My neighbour Jean comes over and gives me a hand.

GARDEN WATERING: I never water. Well, maybe in the midst of the hottest February I'll give my pots a bit of a squirt with the hose.

WHEN YOU'RE ESTABLISHING A NEW GARDEN: You can get instant gratification by using quick-growing plants like *Iresine herbstii* and *Euphorbia wulfenii*. They are great fillers while more slow-growing plants get established and you can take them out later.

MOST-USED TOOL: My Niwashi Shark. It's great for tidying up plants like flax – it cuts through them like butter. You have to be careful with it near bromeliads; it's easy to slice them right off.

FAVOURITE PLANTING COMBINATIONS: I'm big on contrast: lime green and dark green; matt and shiny.

BEST TIP FOR GARDENERS: When you buy a plant for $15 or $25, spend exactly the same amount on the soil at the same time – buying compost, fertiliser, Osmocote or whatever – and build new soil where you plant it.

Trish Bartleet

Second, the destructive westerly. "I didn't realise how dominant it would be. Sometimes you can't even open the door." The wind caused mayhem with the ponga Trish retained when she cleared other vegetation from the site. "They look fabulous for five minutes, then the wind whacks them." And, finally, three busy kids, who left countless plants bruised or broken in their soccer-playing wake.

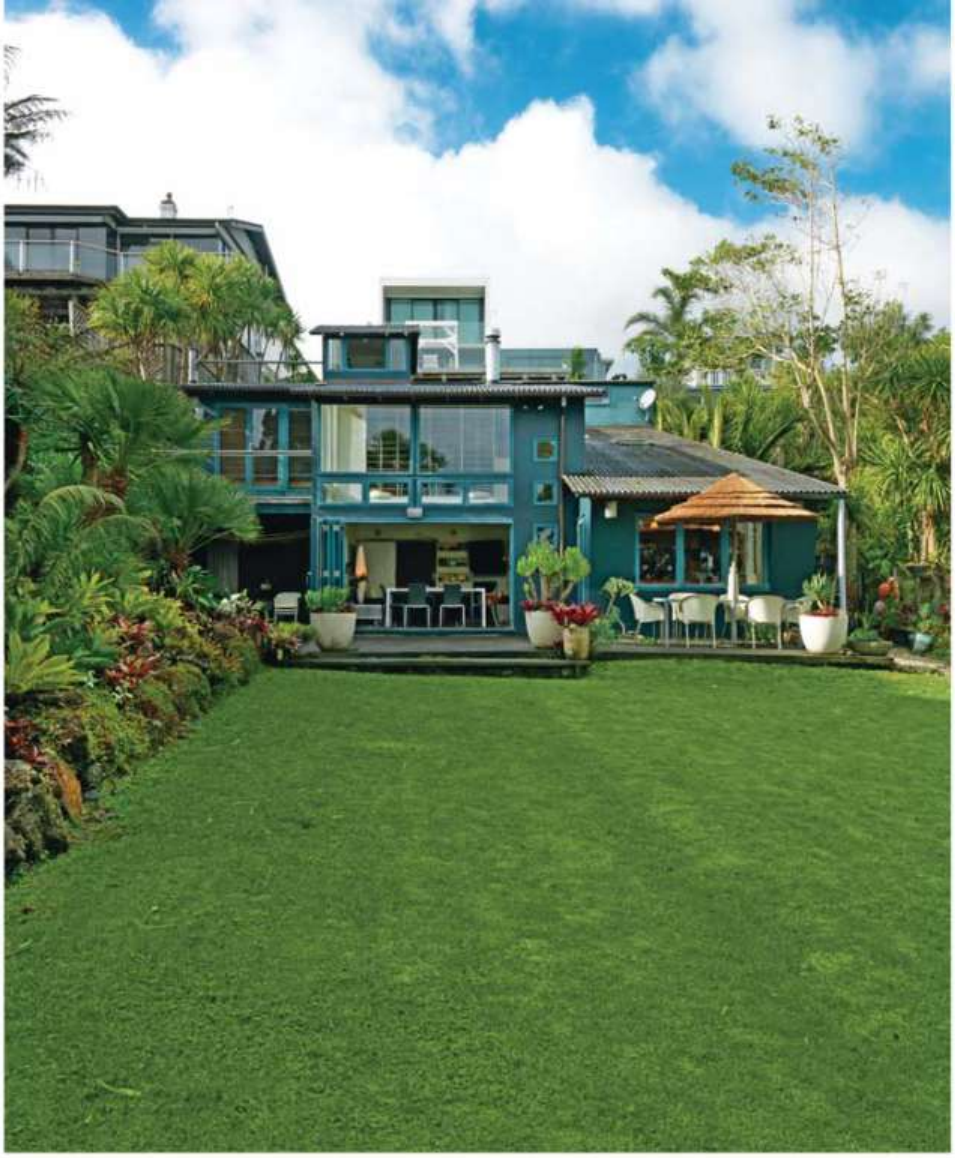
Despite all that, the garden's now a lush place, packed with the subtropicals Trish loves. "I decided early on not to go completely native, although there is a native area down by the beach with oioi and flaxes. But natives don't really like the clay."

An old pohutukawa and cabbage trees provide structure, along with some favourites Trish planted that wouldn't get too huge and block the sun – *Dracaena draco* (dragon tree) and *Chamaerops humilis* (European fan palm), which spread as they mature.

The feature plant on one side of the garden, in a bed with a curve reminiscent of the seashore, is *Aloe thraskii*: "It has wonderful yellow flowers and softens the view of the neighbours."

While natives struggle in the clay and cycads, too, have turned up their toes (Trish has most of her cycads in pots now), bromeliads are quite forgiving. Trish has dozens of varieties growing on the three terraces she's created on the northern





side of her garden. "I've got more and more into them over the years," she says, pointing out some favourites, like the *Aechmea weilbachii* outside her kitchen window with its showy red and purple flowers, the stripy *Vriesea fosteriana* and the spidery tillandsia. "What I really need to do now is select the ones I really like and create bigger drifts of them."

Like everything else in the garden, bromeliads need to be kept tidy, says Trish, with old ones culled to make way for the new "pups" that develop. In fact, the best gardens are ones that are maintained constantly, says Trish, which takes knowledge and persistence. "Designers know what to do, so are more likely to have well-maintained gardens. People say to me: 'I had no idea I should prune that back so hard.'"

Fortunately, Trish is happiest with a pair of clippers or a spade in her hand. "I love the physicality of gardening," she says. After a strenuous session dealing to the ficus creeper that lines the driveway, "There's nothing better than sitting down with a beer and enjoying that sense of achievement you have at the end of a day's gardening."

You can see a garden designed by Trish in the Auckland Garden DesignFest, 14-15 November, gardendesignfest.co.nz. It's a sheltered garden in Auckland's Westmere that features natives and subtropicals. But, best of all, no wind. "My dream," says Trish. ■





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Sally

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THESE PAGES The garden of Great Dixter, in Northiam, East Sussex, surrounds a house created by architect Edwin Lutyens in 1910-12 from an existing 15th century house, a 16th century addition transplanted from Kent and new work by Lutyens himself; seen here is the long border on the eastern side of the house, which is carefully planned so that there's always something of interest from April to October.

Heritage in bloom

A New Zealand gardener has found a happy home in Great Dixter's gloriously English garden

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS **SARAH CHARLES**







If you visit Great Dixter, one of England's most famous houses and gardens, be sure to make your way to the bountiful vege patch. There you might be lucky enough to encounter New Zealander Aaron Bertelsen, who is housekeeper and event organiser as well as vegetable gardener at this English institution.

Aaron caught the gardening bug from his green-fingered grandparents, but his interest was cemented at Wesley College in Pukekohe. As a pupil there he watched the gardens being revitalised by an elderly gardener who took them over and turned them around. After university, Aaron was working at a nursery when he came across the work of Christopher Lloyd, son of Great Dixter's first owners, and then England's foremost garden writer. Aaron wrote to ask if he could make a three-month visit to study and work in the garden. The answer was an enthusiastic "yes".

That first visit in 1996 was the beginning of a warm friendship between Aaron and Christopher. After three years Aaron left to study at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and later at the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens in Israel, before returning to Great Dixter in 2005 to help Christopher, whose health was failing. Christopher died in 2006, but Aaron stayed on, still captivated by the house, created by the famed architect Edwin Lutyens, and the arts and crafts-style gardens, with their luscious blooms and bold experimental mixes of colour and form.

"It's the scale of everything that so impresses," says Aaron, recalling his introduction to Great Dixter. >



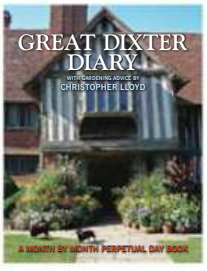


THIS PAGE (from top) In the stock beds, a variety of plants are grown on for planting in the borders – astilbe, phlox, helenium and verbascum. The kitchen yard, a Lutyens addition that originally housed a pig, is now filled with a mix of herbs and plants in pots.
OPPOSITE (from top) The yew topiary needs clipping only once a year; if it's done in August it will hold its sharp outlines right through until May. Aaron Bertelsen in the vegetable garden: "Growing vegetables need more water than you think. Water whenever you can," he advises.









Great Dixter Diary by Sarah Charles, a perpetual day diary, $30 plus postage; to order email sarah@antcreative.com.

THIS PAGE Fruit and vegetables from the garden are sold in the front porch if they're not needed for catering at the house; Aaron also makes jams and other preserves, including redcurrant and cherry vodkas (his recipe: "Fill a third of each bottle with fruit and sugar and top up the rest with vodka. Keep turning until the sugar has dissolved and leave for four months, turning the bottles each time you pass to move the fruit around.") **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) The bay window opens out from the upstairs solar, with the sewing room of Christopher's mother, Daisy Lloyd, directly below. The butler's sink in the kitchen, where Aaron prepares meals for guests and events. The house goes through masses of salad, so Aaron has to keep sowing new seed frequently to keep up the supply.

"I was in awe of the place – the size of the Great Hall, the length of the long flower border, the longest in England. And nowhere in the world does anyone garden with this degree of detail or experimentation."

The garden was first laid out in the fields around the house in the 1910s by Christopher's parents and Lutyens. That garden came to maturity under the stewardship of Christopher, the last Lloyd to live in the house, and formed the basis for all his horticultural experiments and writings.

Famous for colour and succession planting, Great Dixter keeps up a formidable level of interest throughout the whole year. The gardeners might plant out 600 poppies grown from seed into containers or into loose dart shapes among the existing flowers to create striking combinations. Massive numbers of plants are propagated and grown on in Dixter's nursery and the borders are continually replanted so that, as flowers die, fresh new flowering plants are in place to take over the show.

Under Fergus Garrett, Christopher's head gardener and now also Dixter's chief executive, Aaron spends his days looking after the historic Grade 1-listed house and growing the vegetables required for the Dixter kitchen, which caters for guests, parties and functions. No two days are alike at the house, which is alive with a constant stream of visitors – friends and relations of the Lloyd family, representatives from the world of horticulture and devotees, students and scholars wanting the Dixter magic to rub off on them. Everything is carefully noted by Aaron in his garden diary, just as Christopher's own black diaries give us a key to the past. *You can read Aaron's blog at greatdixter.co.uk.* ■





Puravida by Hansgrohe featured on pg 61

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DWINDLING SHELF LIFE

What will our Kindles say about us when bookshelves have become quaint relics of the past?

WORDS **JANICE MARRIOTT & VIRGINIA PAWSEY** / ILLUSTRATION **PIPPA FAY**

DEAR JANICE



I'm a fallen woman. I've fallen deeply in love with my Kindle when I promised I wouldn't. I vowed I would remain loyal to real books and resisted the Kindle's advantages for more than a year. I would only buy books on it sometimes, I said, for a holiday treat or when I was desperate. But, sadly, I have slowly succumbed to the seductive device. Every time I pass my shelves full of beautiful books I feel guilty for forsaking them for another.

The Kindle, as well as having serious implications for bookshops, has the potential to change the look of interior decorating. What will happen to built-in bookcases if there are no more books? Will they become quaint relics of the past, housing shelf-loads of tatty books with torn covers, or will they be filled with those tawdry faux book ends that pull out to reveal empty frames? And what of the art books and glossy magazines that litter our coffee tables? I have friends who brazenly announce they read their magazines online and I wonder, is this the beginning of the end of the glossy magazine too?

I love looking at people's bookshelves to see what they contain. Books are honest home decorating accessories; they tell us about their owners and their interests and they add colour to a room. A Kindle is a secretive device, a slim slice of plastic with a grey face that reveals nothing unless it's switched on. And even then you would have to be very nosy indeed to find out what books were stored within its archives.

Without books, the only other means of casually determining a person's interests is to take note of "autobiographical clutter". And if they are not disposed to clutter, well it could take years to discover that the quiet high-country farmer up the road is an expert on the lyrics of Leonard Cohen. I'm wondering, are you a fallen woman too or do you still buy books?

Virginia

DEAR VIRGINIA



Call me old-fashioned but Kindles don't appeal to me. I prefer the bright light of an iPad, but I don't read books on it, just newspapers. (No black-ink-stained fingertips that way.) In my house I have bookshelves crammed with books – all anchored to the walls and earthquake-proof. They make excellent insulation as well as good reading. My interior decoration style is what I call Nouveau Bookist – cushions, couches and lots of books. Most books are shelved but others move around – scattershot on the window seat, on rugs, couches, dining room table, kitchen bench.

Hundreds of the books in this house are for children. In bedrooms, study and lounge there are bookshelves, couches and lamps – an essential comfort triangle. The couches are red. That seems to be essential too. Children make nests on the couches and spread books around themselves, picking one up, discarding it, choosing another, sharing pictures with each other.

There are disadvantages to so many books. I'm having the house's foundations repiled, no doubt because of the weight. If I lose my phone it's under a book somewhere. If it rings and I rush towards the sound, there's a risk I may slip on an open book and glide, fast and inelegant, across the floor. This happens. But the worst yet-to-happen disaster would be triggered by visiting Wellington and staying in friend Jane's spare room. Jane likes books too, but she is a collector, whereas I'm just a book glutton. Her spare room is really her library and has floor to ceiling bookshelves, all filled with books, old and hardback. I lie there in the bed assembled out of a sofa and stare up at those teetering books.

Jane says the shelves have been secured to the wall. Yes, I think, but I don't like my chances if I am buried under an avalanche of books during an earthquake. So, though I love books, I'd prefer a friend with a Kindle to one with tall, crammed bookshelves.

Janice



Leanne, Margot, Helen, Tina, Gayl, Le-Ellen & Karen
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SPRING FRESH

BLOSSOM FESTIVAL
Welcome the new season with a garden party

CUT THE MUSTARD
The most versatile of condiments

HOME ON THE RANGE
Chef Nic Watt's dinner party dishes

SMALL BITES
Freshly minted ideas from our food editor

BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

Celebrate the arrival of *spring* with a charmingly *floriferous* garden party

RECIPES & FOOD STYLING **BERNADETTE HOGG**
STYLING **CLAUDIA KOZUB**
PHOTOGRAPHS **MANJA WACHSMUTH**



MENU

RHUBARB & CUSTARD CREAM LAYERED SPONGE CAKE

CHOCOLATE & RASPBERRY BROWNIE BITES

WHITE CHOCOLATE & STRAWBERRY SWIRL CHEESECAKES

LIME & CORIANDER PIKELETS WITH CRÈME FRAICHE & PRAWNS

GREEN TEA & POMEGRANATE SPARKLING COCKTAIL

ASPARAGUS, GRUYÈRE & PANCETTA QUICHE



RHUBARB & CUSTARD CREAM LAYERED SPONGE CAKE

Don't be put off by the length of this recipe: there are a few stages but none is difficult (the rhubarb can be prepared well ahead) and the end result is a scrumptious show-stopper of a cake.

Sponges:
70g cornflour, plus 1 tablespoon extra for dusting
50g flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
6 eggs, separated
150g caster sugar, plus 1 tablespoon extra for dusting
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
Rhubarb:
750g rhubarb, cut into 2cm lengths
375g sugar
Custard cream:
300ml cream, beaten
150ml thick vanilla custard (bought or made)

Sponges: Grease 3 x 20cm round sponge pans. Dust the sides with the extra caster sugar and cornflour then line the bases with baking paper. Heat oven to 180°C.

Sift cornflour, flour and baking powder together twice.

Beat egg whites to soft peaks. Gradually add caster sugar and beat until stiff. Add vanilla and egg yolks one at a time, beating after each addition until mixture is thick and creamy.

Sift flour mixture once more over the egg mixture and use a large metal spoon to combine carefully.

Divide mixture evenly between tins and bake 20-25 minutes or until sponges feel springy and have just started to pull away from the sides. Cool for 5 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack.

Rhubarb: Combine rhubarb and the sugar in the top of a double boiler or in a bowl set over a pan of boiling water. Cover and simmer until rhubarb is tender, about 30 minutes. Cool completely then strain through a sieve. Reserve any liquid and set the strained rhubarb aside.

Place rhubarb liquid in a small pan and cook over a high heat until syrupy enough to coat the back of a spoon. Leave to cool.

Custard cream: Combine the beaten cream carefully with the custard and refrigerate until needed.

To serve: Assemble close to serving. Place a sponge on a plate and spread with half the strained rhubarb. Add a layer of custard cream and top with the second sponge, repeating with rhubarb and custard cream. Add the final sponge, dust with icing sugar and decorate with flowers. Serve drizzled with reserved rhubarb syrup. *Makes a 3-tier 20cm cake*

CHOCOLATE & RASPBERRY BROWNIE BITES

This recipe can easily be made gluten-free by replacing the flour with a standard GF baking flour and using GF baking powder.

Brownie:
250g butter
500g caster sugar
125g cocoa powder, sifted
5 eggs, lightly beaten
100g flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
250g dark chocolate drops
Freeze-dried raspberry powder (optional)
Ganache:
4 tablespoons cream
200g dark chocolate (50-70% cocoa), broken into pieces
Fresh raspberries for garnish

Heat oven to 150°C. Line a 20cm x 30cm cake pan with baking paper.

Melt butter and place in a large bowl. Mix in caster sugar then sift cocoa over and mix in. Add eggs and mix well.

Sift flour and baking powder over and gently mix in. Fold in chocolate drops.

Spoon mixture into prepared pan, level the top and bake until surface is just firm to the touch, about 55 minutes. Cool completely in the pan before cutting into small squares. If desired, dust with a little freeze-dried raspberry powder.

Ganache: Heat cream and chocolate together over simmering water in double boiler, stirring until chocolate melts. Cool ganache in fridge until it thickens to piping consistency, about 10 minutes.

Pipe or spoon a small dollop of ganache onto each brownie square. Top each square with a raspberry before serving. *Makes about 40 bite-sized pieces*



WHITE CHOCOLATE & STRAWBERRY SWIRL CHEESECAKES

Sweet white chocolate and strawberries is a winning combination and a gingery, nutty base makes these individual cheesecakes even more delicious.

Base:
12 gingernut biscuits, broken into small crumbs
½ cup macadamia nuts, lightly toasted and finely chopped
60g butter, melted
Filling:
125ml cream
½ cup white chocolate melts
2 tablespoons water
1½ teaspoons gelatin
250g cream cheese, softened
1 vanilla pod, seeds scraped
¼ cup icing sugar, sifted
Topping:
50g strawberries
1 teaspoon icing sugar
2 teaspoons orange juice

Base: Combine biscuit crumbs, nuts and butter. Take 10 small (½ cup) cupcake paper cases. Divide mixture between them, pressing it firmly into the bases. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Filling: Place 100ml of the cream in a double boiler with the chocolate melts and stir over simmering water until chocolate has melted. Remove from heat.

Place water in a small microwave-safe bowl and sprinkle gelatin over. Leave for 5 minutes to swell then microwave for 20 seconds or until it dissolves. Set aside.

Place cream cheese, vanilla seeds, icing sugar and remaining 25ml of cream in a bowl and beat until combined. Stir in chocolate mixture then gelatin. Spoon mixture into paper cases.

Topping: Purée strawberries with icing sugar and orange juice. Put a few dollops of strawberry mixture on top of each cheesecake and use a skewer to swirl it through to create a ripple effect. Place in the refrigerator for 4 hours or until set.

If desired, serve cheesecakes with a dollop of cream and a drizzle of any remaining strawberry purée. *Makes 8-10*

LIME & CORIANDER PIKELETS WITH CRÈME FRAICHE & PRAWNS

These savoury pikelets are a delicious, simple-to-make take on traditional Russian blini. (They're also cheaper, since they don't include caviar!) We have made them gluten-free but you could use regular flour.

Pikelets:
1 cup gluten-free self-raising flour
¼ teaspoon salt
⅔ cup low-fat milk
2 eggs
20g butter, melted, plus a little extra for greasing pan
1 lime, finely grated zest
2 tablespoons chopped coriander leaves
Topping:
200g crème fraiche
½ lime, juice and zest
1 teaspoon sweet chilli sauce
1 teaspoon fish sauce
2 teaspoons finely chopped coriander leaves, plus extra whole leaves for garnish
22 cooked prawns, tails intact

Pikelets: Sift flour and salt into a bowl and make a well in the centre.

Whisk milk and eggs together, pour into the well in the flour and whisk until just combined.

Add melted butter and whisk again then fold in lime zest and coriander.

To cook, lightly grease a non-stick pan with a little butter and heat to a medium temperature. Working in batches, spoon tablespoonfuls of pikelet mixture into pan and cook until small bubbles appear on the surface. Turn and cook until lightly golden on the second side. Cool on a rack, covered with a tea towel, until ready to add topping. (Pikelets are best eaten the day they are made.)

Topping: Combine crème fraiche with lime juice and zest, sweet chilli sauce and fish sauce. Stir in chopped coriander.

Spoon or pipe mixture onto pikelets and top each one with a cooked prawn and coriander leaf. *Makes 22* >





GREEN TEA & POMEGRANATE SPARKLING COCKTAIL

You can make this refreshing drink alcoholic or not, by mixing it with either bubbly wine, apple cider or sparkling water. The base will keep for a week.

1 cup boiling water
⅓ cup liquid honey
2 green tea teabags
1 litre pomegranate juice
1 fresh pomegranate, seeds and any juice
Sparkling wine, apple cider or sparkling water to serve

Pour boiling water into a heatproof container. Add honey and teabags, stirring to dissolve honey. Leave to steep for 10 minutes then discard teabags and leave tea to cool completely.

Place cooled tea in a jug and add pomegranate juice, seeds and any juice from the fresh fruit. Chill until needed.

To serve, add one part chilled tea mixture to two parts chilled sparkling wine, apple cider or sparkling water. *Makes about 5 cups base*

ASPARAGUS, GRUYÈRE & PANCETTA QUICHE

You could save time and use bought savoury short pastry sheets for this tasty tart, but pastry dough really is a doddle to make in a food processor.

Pastry:
200g flour
100g butter, well chilled, cut into small cubes
1 egg yolk
3-4 tablespoons chilled water

Filling:
20g butter
1 small onion, finely chopped
8 slices pancetta, coarsely chopped
30g gruyère cheese, grated
3 eggs
150ml cream
50ml milk
1 small lemon, finely grated zest
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
450g fresh asparagus, trimmed and blanched

Pastry: Mix flour and butter in a food processor until fine and crumbly. Add egg yolk and 3 tablespoons chilled water. Process until dough comes together in a ball, adding a little extra water if needed. Form into a flat brick shape, wrap with plastic and refrigerate at least 30 minutes.

Heat oven to 190°C. Roll out dough between 2 sheets of plastic wrap and line a 34cm x 12cm tart tin. Prick base all over with a fork. Cover with crumpled baking paper and top with baking beans. Bake for 10 minutes then remove paper and beans. Trim pastry edges and cook for a further 5 minutes or until lightly golden.

Filling: Reduce oven temperature to 180°C. Melt butter in a pan over low heat. Add onion and half the pancetta and sauté until onion is soft and transparent.

Spoon mixture over base of pastry case and sprinkle with half the gruyère.

Combine eggs, cream, milk, zest and nutmeg, and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Pour mixture into pastry case and top with asparagus spears, remaining cheese and slices of pancetta.

Bake for 25-30 minutes until set. Allow to sit for at least 10 minutes before slicing and serving. *Makes 34cm x 12cm quiche*





Cut the MUSTARD

These *quick and easy* recipes featuring various *forms of mustard* are sure to *make the grade*

RECIPES & STYLING **BERNADETTE HOGG**
PHOTOGRAPHS **MANJA WACHSMUTH**

WHOLEGRAIN SESAME MUSTARD

This makes a lovely home-made gift and is delicious with red meats or tossed through Asian greens before serving. Mix the contents of a jar of standard **wholegrain mustard** (ours was 175g) with several tablespoons of toasted **sesame seeds**, about ½ teaspoon **sesame oil** and the zest and juice of half a **lime**. Spoon into small, clean, sealable jars. Mustard will keep in the fridge for several weeks.



MUSTARD & MAPLE-GLAZED ROAST VEGETABLES

Prepare a selection of vegetables for roasting. Combine several tablespoons each of **olive oil**, **maple syrup** and **wholegrain mustard**. Toss two-thirds of the mixture through the vegetables and place in a hot oven to cook. While the vegetables are roasting, boil some **brussels sprouts** until just tender then drain and toss with the remaining mustard glaze. Add to the roasting vegetables in the last 10 minutes of cooking. Serve scattered with crispy bacon.



MUSTARD & SMOKED PAPRIKA SALT

This is great sprinkled over potato and kumara fries, served with a bowl of aioli with a little wholegrain mustard stirred through. It's also wonderful on slices of fresh pineapple. Process together 2 tablespoons **flaky sea salt**, 2 teaspoons **mustard powder** and a good pinch of **smoked paprika**. Once combined, mix in a little extra flaky sea salt for texture.



WHITE BEAN, KALE & MUSTARD DIP

Place a rinsed and drained can (about 400g) of **cannellini beans** in a food processor. Gently sauté 3 cloves of chopped **garlic** in several tablespoons of **olive oil** then add a handful of chopped **kale** leaves and cook until wilted. Add this to the beans along with 2 tablespoons **Dijon mustard**, the juice of half a large **lemon** and enough olive oil to make a spreadable dip. Pulse to combine and season to taste. Drizzle with a little olive oil just before serving with fresh vegetables or pita crisps for dipping. >



MUSTARD & RASPBERRY VINAIGRETTE

Drizzle this dressing over crisp iceberg lettuce, lamb, chicken or venison salads. Pass a cup of fresh or frozen (thawed) **raspberries** through a sieve to remove the seeds. To the raspberry juice add 2 tablespoons each of **white balsamic vinegar**, **wholegrain honey-flavoured mustard** and the juice of a **lemon** or large lime. If available, also add a couple of tablespoons of **raspberry vinegar**; this is not necessary but does add to the raspberry flavour. ■

WHITE TIN SERVING PLATE (WITH ROAST VEGETABLES), CHOPPING BOARD WITH LINEN TAPE (WITH BEAN DIP) AND ROBERT GORDON TAPAS DISH (WITH SMOKED PAPRIKA SALT), ALL FROM GREEN WITH ENVY, GREENWITHENVY.CO.NZ, (09) 422 7554.



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New Zealand chef Nic Watt has made his name establishing spectacular Japanese robatayaki restaurants around the world, including the award-winning Masu in Auckland (robatayaki is the traditional Japanese barbecue). He has a passion for seafood and Asian cuisines. His approach to cooking is based on simplicity and perfection and a dedication to detail, using fresh local ingredients and enhancing the natural flavours of each dish.

HOME ON THE RANGE

Acclaimed chef Nic Watt shares favourite dishes he likes to cook for *guests at home*

RECIPES **NIC WATT** / PHOTOGRAPHS **MANJA WACHSMUTH**



TERIYAKI VENISON WITH ROASTED RICE HERB CRUST

This is a go-to recipe for Nic when he is cooking a special meal for a group at home. It can easily be halved for a smaller cut of venison, and is also good with beef or a boneless joint such as rib-eye.

1 farm-raised venison rack or loin (about 600g)
Teriyaki sauce:
2 cups soy sauce
2 cups mirin
1 cup sake
150g caster sugar
1 pinch dried chilli flakes
Rice herb crust:
1 cup short-grain rice
Vegetable oil for frying
2 tablespoons Vietnamese mint, chopped
2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
2 tablespoons chervil, chopped
4 tablespoons dried chilli flakes

Trim meat of sinew, leaving a thin layer of fat across the top (or you can ask your butcher to do this). Season all over with freshly cracked black pepper and sea salt.

Teriyaki sauce: Place soy, mirin, sake, caster sugar and chilli in a medium pot and bring to a simmer, stirring constantly to ensure sugar dissolves. Simmer until mixture has reduced by 40 per cent. Set aside to cool before marinating venison.

Cover venison with half the sauce and leave to marinate 1 hour before cooking.

Rice herb crust: Wash rice and leave to soak in water for 20 minutes. Drain and leave to dry for 20 minutes.

Heat a little oil in a large saucepan until very hot. Add rice (it will spit so take care) and cook, stirring constantly, until golden and crisp. Tip onto paper towels to cool.

Once rice has cooled, give it a quick pound in a mortar and pestle to break it down a little. If making ahead, store in fridge until needed. Add herbs and chilli to complete crust mixture.

To cook: This venison is delicious cooked over coals. If you have that option available, cook meat while basting regularly with remaining teriyaki sauce, until it is caramelised on the outside and medium rare on the inside.

Alternatively, cook meat on a barbecue or sear it in a hot pan before placing in a 180-200°C oven 30-40 minutes. Baste the venison regularly with remaining sauce.

Once cooked, allow venison to rest in a warm place for 10 minutes.

Place rice herb crust on a flat plate and roll venison through it until covered. Slice into thick steaks and serve on a large platter surrounded by remaining rice mix. *Serves 6 as a sharing plate*

BUTTERFLIED TIGER PRAWNS WITH LEMON, CORIANDER & ALMONDS

These finger-licking-good prawns, served as a pre-dinner taster or sharing plate, are marinated before being grilled, either on the barbecue or in a pan.

6 extra-large whole raw tiger prawns
Marinade:
5 tablespoons lemon juice
1 preserved lemon, finely diced (peel only, no pith)
1 teaspoon dried smoked chilli*
½ cup fresh coriander leaves
5 tablespoons olive oil
To serve:
½ cup fresh coriander
1 long mild red chilli, sliced into rings
¼ cup flaked almonds, toasted
Lemons for squeezing

Start by butterflying prawns. Place them top side down on a chopping board. Using a small knife, carefully cut slits down the centre of each prawn from just under the head down to the tail. Remove the vein then turn prawn over and press down gently to flatten out evenly.

Marinade: Combine lemon juice, preserved lemon, smoked chilli, coriander and olive oil in a food processor and blitz to make a wet paste.

Place marinade in a flat dish and lay butterflied prawns on top. Keep in fridge until ready to cook.

Heat a barbecue or frypan on high and cook prawns, meat side down first, allowing them to colour nicely before turning. While cooking the shell side, spoon a little extra marinade into the cooked side of the tail.

Serve prawns on a large platter topped with coriander, chilli and almonds, with lemons for squeezing. *Serves 6*

** Nic buys whole smoked ancho chillies and crushes them.*



CRISPY EGGS WITH TAMARIND CARAMEL SAUCE & HERBS

Don't think of fried eggs only as breakfast food: this entrée dish is a revelation and sure to be a dinner party talking point. The sauce is a taste sensation too. Save any that's left over for spooning onto weeknight meat and vegetables.

For the caramel:
250g coconut sugar or grated palm sugar
2 long red chillies (about finger length), thinly sliced, or 1 teaspoon minced chilli
1 stalk lemongrass, well bruised with the back of a knife
5 kaffir lime leaves, roughly torn or sliced
50g shallots, peeled and sliced
50g fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
30g tamarind purée
1½ tablespoons fish sauce
For the eggs:
8-12 eggs (allow 2 per serving)
About 500ml canola oil
To serve:
1 cup coriander leaves
1 cup Vietnamese mint (or regular mint)
¼ cup crispy shallots*
Chilli threads* for garnish (optional)

Caramel: Combine coconut sugar, chilli, lemongrass, lime leaves, shallots and ginger in a saucepan and place over heat, stirring with a metal spoon until sugar dissolves. Boil for a few minutes then remove from heat and stir in tamarind purée and fish sauce. Pass through a sieve to remove solids and set aside to cool.

Eggs: Heat oil in a wok until sizzling hot (check with a bit of bread). Crack each egg into a ramekin then gently pour it into the hot oil. Cook until eggs are golden and crisp on the bottom side then turn. Once both sides are crispy, remove eggs from oil and drain on paper towels.

Serve eggs warm, topped with a few tablespoons of the cooled caramel sauce, surrounded with coriander, mint and crispy shallots and garnished with chilli if desired. *Serves 4-6*

** Crispy shallots are sold in many supermarkets, in the Asian section. Nic uses ito-togarashi, fine threads of chilli pepper, sourced from a Japanese supplier.*

SNAPPER EN PAPILLOTE WITH BROCCOLI, TOMATO, CHILLI & GARLIC

Nic cooks this paper-wrapped fish dish at home at least once a week. It's super-tasty, super-easy and there are no messy baked-on pans to wash up.

6 snapper fillets, skin off and bones removed
6 pieces baking paper, 20cm x 40cm
1 large head of broccoli, florets cut into small pieces
2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
3 green chillies, finely sliced
6 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
12 tablespoons (180ml) soy sauce
12 tablespoons (180ml) olive oil
Handful flat-leaf parsley leaves
Handful basil tips
Freshly cracked black pepper
3 lemons

Heat oven to 180°C. Place each snapper fillet on a piece of baking paper.

Evenly divide broccoli, tomatoes, chillies and garlic neatly across the top of each piece of snapper.

Combine soy sauce and olive oil and evenly divide the mixture across each piece of snapper.

Follow with parsley, basil and pepper and a good squeeze of lemon (half a lemon per piece of fish).

Fold paper over and twist and crimp it to seal. (You could also sew a running thread of cooking string through the ends, as Nic does, for a smart finish.) Bake for 12 minutes.

To serve, place parcels on serving plates for guests to open themselves while enjoying the aromas. Accompany with steamed vegetables. *Serves 6* >





FROMAGE BLANC WITH POACHED TAMARILLOS & PISTACHIOS

Fromage blanc is a fresh cheese of French origin – its name means "white cheese". It is very simple to make and this sweetened, soft and creamy version is a gorgeous match with the slightly astringent tamarillos.

Fromage blanc:
125g cream cheese
40g icing sugar
250g crème fraiche
250g sweetened natural yoghurt
1 large piece of muslin
Poached tamarillos:
6 tamarillos
2 tablespoons icing sugar
½ cup water
½ vanilla bean
300ml red wine
To serve:
6 tablespoons chopped pistachios
Basil tips for garnish

Fromage blanc: Mash cream cheese and icing sugar together until combined. Add crème fraiche and yoghurt and whisk until smooth.

Place mixture in muslin, carefully form into a ball and tie with string. Place ball in a colander or sieve placed over a bowl. Refrigerate for 1 day to allow the whey to drain, leaving a creamy and soft but semi-firm cheese.

Tamarillos: Peel tamarillos by slicing a small cross in the bottom of each one. Plunge them into boiling water for 20 seconds then remove and immediately plunge into cold water. Take from the water and carefully pull off skin.

Place icing sugar, water, vanilla and wine in a saucepan and gently bring to a simmer. Add tamarillos and simmer 2-3 minutes. Take off heat and allow fruit to gently poach in the remaining warmth. Tamarillos are poached when a skewer pierces through the fruit with ease. Set aside until serving time.

To serve, place a tamarillo and some of the poaching syrup in each serving bowl and spoon a portion of fromage blanc next to each one. Top with pistachios and basil tips. *Serves 6* ■



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SMALL BITES

Shopping news and seasonal tips from food editor **Sally Butters**

Learn about: MUSTARD

Mustard is a member of the brassica family. Three types are grown for their seeds: white (*Brassica alba*), black (*B. nigra*) and brown (*B. juncea*). White mustard (often called yellow mustard) is the mildest and black the most pungent. Mustard seeds have virtually no aroma when whole or even when ground – an enzyme in mustard holds the key to its bitingly hot taste and this needs contact with liquid to be activated. When mixing powdered mustard with water, allow 10-15 minutes for the flavour to develop and don't use hot water, as it will kill the enzyme. Acidic liquids such as vinegar halt the enzyme reaction, so are useful to add to mustard when the desired heat level has been reached. Prepared mustards, such as Dijon, are made by soaking mustard seeds in water then adding wine, vinegar or verjuice along with herbs and spices. Frying mustard seeds in oil – as for a curry – releases a slight piquancy without heat, as the enzyme is not activated. Making your own mustard is easy and rewarding and home-made flavoured mustards make a great gift. See our how-to guide and recipes at nzhouseandgarden.co.nz. Enjoy mustard in our Fast & Flash recipes on page 132.



EISING FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY/STOCKFOOD/PHOTONEWZEALAND

THREE TASTY SNACK IDEAS

1



2



3



1 Pascal's meaty, traditional French-style Porc Pâté, $8.50 per 110g jar, pascals.co.nz. 2 Sealord tuna pockets – Peri Peri, Salsa Verde, Tahitian Coconut or Lemon, Sesame & Ginger flavour – $2.60 per 110g sachet at supermarkets. 3 Gerry's Corn Star mini wraps, great for kids, cute quesadillas and tiny tacos, $5.95 per 12-pack at gerrys.co.nz.

I'M LOVING...



TOWN TALK WAXES Keep your kitchen surfaces sparkling with Town Talk's Marble Wax and Wooden Work Surface Wax, $29.50 each, (03) 546 9739 for stockists.



BREAD ARMOR BAGS These resealable, reusable storage bags keep bread fresh up to 10 times longer than regular plastic bags thanks to their special barrier film. $23 per three-pack of various sizes, see unclezitos.co.nz.



FANCY FETTUCINE Unlike many gluten-free pastas, Organic Edamame & Mung Bean Fettucine from Explore Asian doesn't become mushy and unappetising, even if overcooked. $5.90 per 200g from thecrueltyfreeshop.co.nz.

BLACK & WHITE Pea-sized Sabarot White Coco Beans (for sides or casseroles), $8.50 per 500g, and Beluga Lentils (they look like black beluga caviar when cooked), $10.90 per 500g, both from sabato.co.nz.

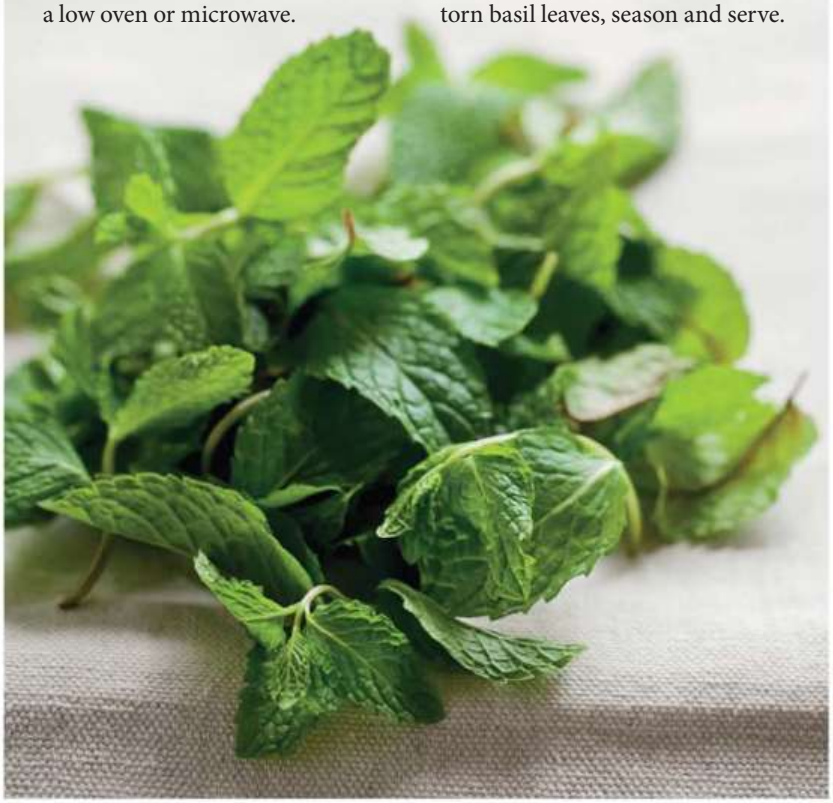


FLAVOURED SALTS Dishy Mediterranean flake salts – chipotle, black, lemon, smoked, natural and porcini flavours –$7.50 per 40g, see rogershomewares.com. Spicecraft Wild Rock Salt, smoked salt blend for game, $8 per 80g, spicecraft.co.nz. >



Enjoy now: MINT

• Mint is the perfect herb for brightening palates and plates in spring. "The very smell of mint reanimates the spirit," said the Roman naturalist Pliny.
• There are more than 40 varieties of this common and easily grown herb, including pineapple, ginger, apple, lemon and chocolate.
• The most commonly used kitchen mint is spearmint (*Mentha spicata*), often labelled English garden mint, with its pointy, deep green, crinkled leaves and uplifting freshness. It is suitable for all recipes calling for mint.
• Peppermint is more pungent, with pronounced menthol notes, and is primarily used to flavour confectionery and toothpaste.
• Bunches of fresh mint will keep for a couple of days in a glass of water. The leaves can also be chopped and mixed with a little water then frozen in ice cube trays.
• Mint dries well: pick before flowering and hang bunches in a dry, airy place or dry stalks in a low oven or microwave.
• To make mint jelly (a must with spring lamb), dissolve 3 tablespoons sugar in ¾ cup each of rice vinegar and water (or apple juice) and simmer for 5 minutes. Soften 3 teaspoons gelatin in 3 teaspoons water then stir in until dissolved and cool 15 minutes. Finely shred 1 cup loosely packed mint leaves and mix in. Chill until set.
• Frosted mint leaves make a pretty, sweet garnish: beat an egg white with a fork until frothy, paint lightly over leaves and sprinkle thickly with caster sugar. Dry on baking paper for several hours. The leaves will last about a day.
• Make mint pesto by pounding together (or processing) 1 bunch basil, ½ bunch mint (discard all stems), ½ cup toasted pine nuts and 3 cloves garlic. Add ½ cup olive oil, salt and pepper.
• For creamy minted peas, sauté half a diced red onion in a little butter. Add ½ cup cream and 150g peas and boil until peas are cooked. Toss in 12 torn mint leaves and 12 torn basil leaves, season and serve.





BEAN SALAD WITH MINTED LIME & CHILLI DRESSING

Mint jelly and fresh mint give this salad a double whammy of bright, zingy flavour.

250g green beans
2 x 420g cans mixed beans, drained
420g can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
1 small red onion, finely diced
2 tablespoons coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley
2 radishes, finely sliced
Dressing:
½ cup light olive oil
2 tablespoons mint jelly
2 limes, juice and finely grated zest
10 mint leaves, shredded
1 clove garlic
1 teaspoon flaky sea salt
1 red chilli, finely diced

Top and tail beans and halve lengthways (or use a bean slicer). Blanch in boiling water for 1 minute then refresh under cold water.

Toss canned beans, chickpeas, red onion, parsley and blanched beans gently together in a large bowl.

Place dressing ingredients in a jar and shake well to combine. Toss dressing and sliced radishes through bean mix. *Serves 6* ■

RECIPE: JO WILCOX; RECIPE PHOTOGRAPH: AARON McLEAN; FRESH MINT: SYLVIE SHIRAZI/STOCKFOOD/PHOTONEWZEALAND

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WORDS **CLAIRE McCALL**



MABIN GARDEN: PAUL MCCREDIE

THIS PAGE The Mabin family of Hawke's Bay spread their daffodil cheer through the whole community; every spring they open their gates to the public, who visit to gather buckets of blooms; money raised goes to charity, mostly Plunket; visit taniwhadaffodils.co.nz.



THIS PAGE (from top) *Wisteria floribunda* 'Alba' drapes the verandah in spring and fills the garden with scent (the wisteria has since died from borer and been replaced by a different variety); the pink rose on the right is 'Mary Rose' and on the left is the shrub *Physocarpus* 'Aurea'; the grass is *Miscanthus* 'Morning Light'; Linda is keen on pots, which can be moved out of the way when they are past their best. Alwyn and Linda McIntyre. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) Michelle McDonnell in her Tauranga home. Visitors are left in no doubt that spring has arrived, when the flowering cherry *Prunus* 'Awanui' is wreathed in pink blossom. There's plenty of shade in the family's favourite outdoor dining spot, which is flanked by a weeping silver pear, at left, and a weeping cherry, right.

A SCENTED GARDEN

Ringed in roses and festooned with wisteria bunting, Linda and Alwyn McIntyre's homestead near Havelock North is picture-perfect in spring. As well as continually pottering away ensuring their two acres (0.8ha) look the best they can, Linda also works two days a week at the nearby Green Door garden centre.

WHAT HAVE YOU PLANTED FOR SPRING FRAGRANCE? I love sitting on the verandah in the evening and taking in the scent of the *Philadelphus mexicanus*, which grows near the house. It's the first to come out in spring and its perfume seems to permeate the entire garden. I have about 10 different varieties of philadelphus, including 'Belle Etoile' and 'Avalanche'.

WHY DO YOU ENJOY SPRING? I get a chance to relax. After the hard slog of cutting back and pruning in winter, it's a time when I can be hands-off and enjoy the rewards of perennials, shrubs and roses in full flush.

ANY PLANS FOR THE NEW SEASON? When we moved to our property 17 years ago, we inherited an old limestone quarry that was a bit of a dumping ground and an ugly hole. This is the first year it will be incorporated into the main garden. We've spent a decade filling it up and then planting magnolias, lilacs, acer trees and a few hydrangeas. I've spent much of my wages earned at the garden centre buying plants for the quarry, which is now chock-a-block. This spring we will fully mulch it and put in some structure, such as steps to climb up the gentle slope.



MCINTYRE GARDEN: PAUL MCCREDIE; MCDONNELL GARDEN: SALLY TAGG

FEED THE FLOWERS

RELIABLE SPRING PLANT COMBINATIONS: Each winter I plant up terracotta pots with tulips and daffodils, topped up with forget-me-nots. I also use hyacinths, polyanthus, violas and pansies. They all sit on the edge of the verandah so the rain can get at them. I make sure I feed them once they have finished flowering and store them away in a corner out the back once the season is over. Another favourite spring combination is the hostas and Siberian irises that come up by the pond.

TIPS FOR GROWING WISTERIA: I used to have *Wisteria floribunda* 'Alba' at the front of the balcony, but after 14 years it died from borer. I replanted with a wisteria called 'Snow Showers', a floribunda that has the longest racemes. I also grow *Wisteria sinensis* 'Amethyst', which has shorter bunches of flowers in blue. Wisteria need to have their roots in the cool and should be well composted in spring. In January, I cut back the long shoots that are produced after flowering to two or three buds.

TO CARE FOR ROSES IN SPRING: I feed with a general rose fertiliser and, where needed, mulch with compost and leaf mould. Spring is when you need to apply a fungicide and insecticide as needed too. I find that, if I have winter-sprayed with oil and copper, the plants stay healthier in spring.

Linda McIntyre





THAT CHEERY CHERRY

Garden designer Michelle McDonnell and her husband David's Tauranga garden is a tapestry of greens set against a grey and white villa; its hallmarks are elegant topiary and trimmed hedging. To Michelle, spring is the welcome promise of summer to come with bursts of colour in the garden and birds and bees returning. The flowering cherry *Prunus* 'Awanui' puts on an amazing display (above right). "We used to have a pet lamb that would frolic among the pink blossoms that fell onto the lawn. But, when she got a bit older, she started to eat everything and we had to take her to a friend's farm," says Michelle.

WHAT DOES SPRING MEAN TO YOUR FAMILY? We have three teenagers, so we reinstate the badminton net in the middle of the lawn and start barbecuing and eating outside again.

ANY GARDEN PLANS FOR THIS SPRING? I've just returned from Vietnam, where they do lighting so well. Though I won't be using any Chinese lanterns, I am going to incorporate more solar-powered fairy lights, particularly in the weeping crab apple and the silver pear. And I'm inspired to replant a lotus in my concrete planter that I use as a fish bowl (it's a Buddhist symbol of fortune). >



A GOOD HEDGE

ADVICE FOR MAKING THE BEST OF A FORMAL GARDEN IN SPRING: First, give everything a good feed of general fertiliser. Once things start to grow again, trim on a regular basis to keep it looking tidy. This includes my favourite hedge *Michelia yunnanensis* – it's so well-behaved in that it stays dense, flowers twice a year with cream-coloured blooms and, in Tauranga at least, doesn't seem to get diseased. Hedges hide a multitude of sins, as long as they're trimmed properly three times a year. At the end of spring, you need to give them a really proper cut.

MY FAVOURITE SPRING FLOWER: Any of the spring bulbs that provide a splash of colour and my *Prunus* 'Awanui', which puts on a fantastic show.

THIS SPRING I'LL BE PLANTING: After being in Vietnam, I'm keen to plant masses and masses of herbs. Oh yes, and I'll put in some annuals – just whatever looks good at the garden centre. Although I plan other people's garden precisely, I'm a bit more random in my own.

Michelle McDonnell





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DANSKE MØBLER



THIS PAGE (from top) The pink mesembryanthemum puts on a brilliant spring show and is much commented on by passers-by as it edges towards the footpath and merges with the thrift, which flowers all year round if you deadhead it. Wendy Bluett with Sapphire, the family birman.

IN THE PINK

Spring is Wendy Bluett's favourite season, when the brilliant mesembryanthemum spills out onto the footpath outside her Birkenhead Point, Auckland villa. Now that their two daughters have left home, Wendy and husband Tim have more freedom to travel. Happily, their suburban patch in Auckland's Birkenhead Point doesn't go to rack and ruin without intensive, regular care. Which is just the way Wendy planned it: "I hate being a slave to the garden." She'd rather be entertaining friends by the pool when the main players in her eclectically planted paradise put on an extravaganza of colour.

IS SPRING YOUR FAVOURITE SEASON? Yes, because in summer a lot of the colour goes out of the garden, which doesn't like the heat. That's why texture is also so important to include. And I love that texture and colour to return annually.

WHICH PLANTS GIVE THE MOST VIBRANT SEASONAL SHOW? Spring has a kind warmth and there is still moisture in the soil, so it's a fabulous time. The creeping mesembryanthemum, which is planted in a bed that spills onto the road front, is absolutely outstanding – a star in shocking hot pink. Alongside this in the border is thrift; I love its long-stemmed frothy pink pompoms. But red is the dominant colour in the garden. Around the pool is a huge scarlet bougainvillea, along with pelargoniums and geraniums in deep burgundy and scarlet. They just steal my heart. Then, up the side of the villa, clivia is the first to come in – it's a bright little star. I'm a random gardener. If I see it and fancy it, I just pop it in. I don't follow rules.



BLUETT GARDEN: SALLY TAGG & WENDY BLUETT

TIPS FOR A LOW-MAINTENANCE GARDEN Getting rid of unused lawn is a jolly good idea. We did this at the front of the house, which is intensely planted and mulched. When we came back after a couple of months away, we only had to pull out a few weeds and didn't have to worry about getting the lawn mown. >

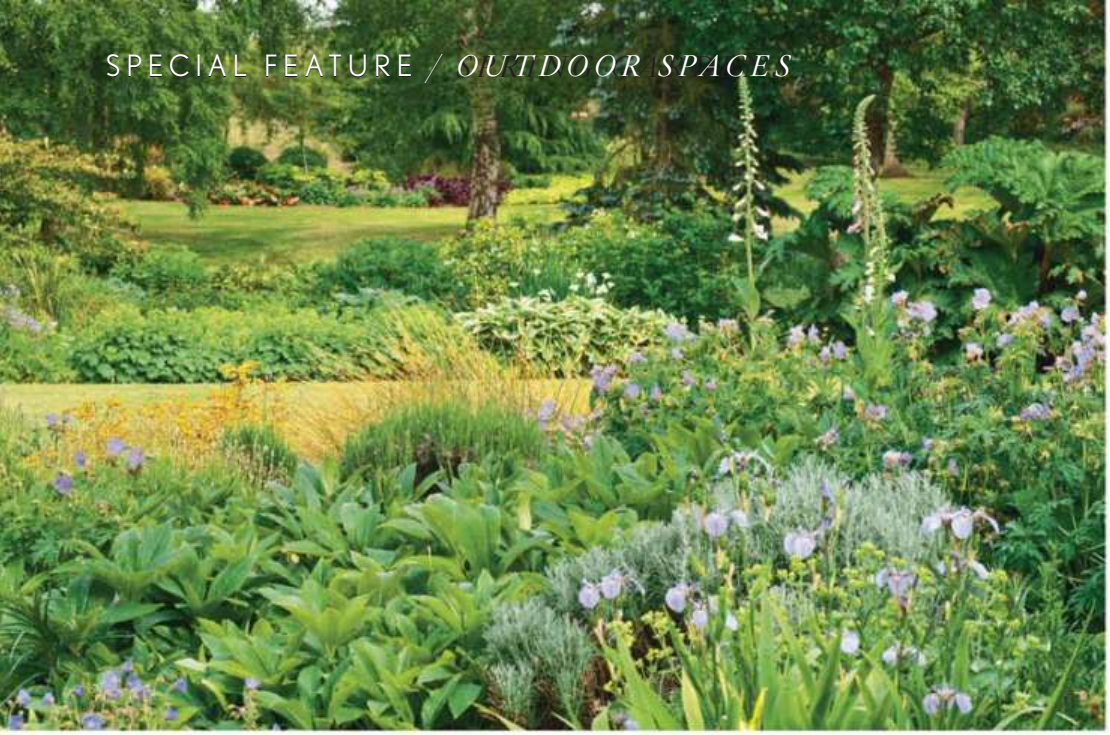
NO-FUSS COLOUR

A SIMPLE WAY TO CREATE A GARDEN WITH LOTS OF COLOUR: The best advice I ever received was from a good friend who, when I was establishing the garden from scratch, said I should choose a plant in a colour that gripped me once a month and put that in. It's what I did for the first few years.

PLANNED SPRING PROJECTS: Apart from clearing out the herb garden and starting again, I'm keen to transplant the cuttings I took from my [climber] *Mandevilla* 'Ruby Fantasy'. The original mother plant died this winter.

TO KEEP THINGS TIDY: I'll have to tend to the lawn in our back garden this spring – I've let it go a bit too far. I am a fan of green so I don't care if it's not perfectly manicured and has a bit of clover in it, but the time has come... I know that in spring I've got to get to grips with certain plants (such as the ladder fern and mesembryanthemum) that will take over if I don't keep them trimmed.

Wendy Bluett



THIS PAGE (from top) The hard work is often done by spring, says Arne Cleland, and he and his wife Jenny can sit back and enjoy the new growth: "Even the evergreens get rid of their winter dowdiness." Arne and Jenny Cleland with foxgloves and *Hosta* 'Blue Boy'.

SPOT THE SNOWDROPS

In Arne and Jenny Cleland's garden in Gore, on the border of Southland and Otago, the first deciduous tree to come into leaf (whatever the weather is doing) is *Nothofagus obliqua*. "It's a Chilean beech and the leaves are beautiful – a fresh, lime green," says Arne. The couple, both keen conservationists who do their bit to save threatened species, own the Pukerau Nursery, which is located alongside their home, so they seldom have their hands out of the soil, even when the winter temperature drops to well below zero. Having established this garden from a bare paddock over the last 22 years, they now have more time to relax. But there's always a new project in the pipeline…

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES THAT HERALD SPRING FOR YOU? We've planted clumps of snowdrops among the natives and they're the earliest sign. When we walk back home from the nursery each evening, they cheer us up. Hellebores, mostly oriental types, flower as well and give great value for months.

ANY BIG PROJECTS HAPPENING THIS SPRING? We are developing a new garden – an acre near Wanaka that we'll initially use as a holiday property. It has a different climate altogether [from Gore] and, since we only have temporary irrigation, we are choosing plants that grow naturally in the local area and don't need regular watering in the summer. We have planted more than 300 natives around the perimeter, including quite a bit of kanuka, coprosma and tussock grasses. We have been very impressed with the growth rate – many plants have doubled in size from spring to spring. We believe in planting tightly and mulching for low maintenance. If there's bare earth, a weed can grow, so we tend to grow shrubs and lots of ground cover. A living roof on part of our new house will be an interesting project. >

DUCKLINGS & BABY BUDS

SPRING IS GREAT BECAUSE: If we've managed to get all the mulching done in autumn, have cut back perennials, fertilised high-need plants with cattle-pad material or blood and bone, pruned the roses and wisteria (and there's no last-minute rush because winter has been so wet), then we can certainly sit back and look out for the next bud that bursts out, or watch the ducklings on the pond.

FAVOURITE NATIVE THAT PUTS ON A SPRING SHOW: Olearia fragrantissima (fragrant tree daisy) is a threatened species that is classified as at risk and declining so, although its soft lemon flowers are at their best in December, I can't miss the chance to mention it. It's deciduous and makes an excellent garden plant in that it grows very upright and doesn't need a lot of room. Its luscious perfume smells of peaches and passionfruit.

Arne Cleland



CLELAND GARDEN: PAUL MCCREDIE



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TEN SPRING BLING THINGS



1

1 *LET THERE BE LIGHT:* Outdoor tables are often chunky. But, if you favour a streamlined look, the new Slim Wood collection from Viteo embraces an exquisite lightness of being. A Corian top "floats" above an iroko wood base, a form that is elegant yet grounded, suitable for indoors and out. From Coastal Design, coastaldesign.co.nz.

2 *HAPPY HOOK-UPS:* Remember the 60s, when summers were spent communing with nature and friends? The sculptural lines of the Holly hanging chair (known as "the hanging egg") are recreated from a classic 1959 design by Nanna and Jorgen Ditzel and recapture that carefree spirit. Handmade in high-quality rattan by Sika Design, the chair is now available from Cavit & Co, cavitco.com.



2



3

3 *COOL CUSTOMER:* Now there's no need to bring out the ice bucket. The Kool Hydra table by Pietro Stoneware features a trough with removable lids for chilling wines or displaying flowers and candles. See Willory (North Island), willory.co.nz, and Pottery World (South Island), potteryworld.co.nz, for stockists.

4 *ONE PEARL, NONE PLAIN:* Knit outdoor furniture, designed by Patrick Norguet for Italian company Ethimo, translates the stitched-loop look of knitting into alfresco elegance. This weave of synthetic fabric rope teams with the durability of delicately crafted teak in loungers, armchairs and love seats (pictured with the Knit rectangular coffee table) that would not look out of place on the Amalfi Coast. From ECC, ecc.co.nz.

5 *BIG BLOOM:* The Voodoo Verbena series, from Palmers (palmers.co.nz), is the largest-flowered verbena available. The new 'Pink Ballet' has blooms from dark to light pink.

6 *GET DOWN WITH IT:* The Tahiti table, sofa, chair and stool set, from Danske Mobler, is ultra-practical. The seating height allows you to eat at the table, then, for post-prandial enjoyment, settle back into the soft seat for after-dinner conversation, without having to move, danskemobler.co.nz.

7 *TO INFINITY:* Contemplating putting in a pool? How will you cope? Typically, says Cameron Greig from Peter Fell, coping stones are used on the edges of pools. But a concrete paving system that continues from the pool surround over the edge allows seamless style and is often more cost-effective too; peterfell.co.nz.

8 *HEAD START ON SUMMER:* Motorised overhead louvres, such as the clean-lined, customisable range from Locarno, allow you to adapt your outdoor living area for ultimate comfort, no matter what the spring weather brings. Open the blades to let the sun shine in or close them to see off a shower without getting off your lounger; locarno.co.nz.



4





9 *GO WITH THE FLOW:* A tile with different finishes for inside and out allows you to cross the threshold without missing a beat. The Beren collection of tiles, from Spanish company Living Ceramics, also have highlights in the grain and fossil spots inspired by Catalan limestone. From Tile Space, tiles.co.nz.

10 *TAKE IT OUTSIDE:* The Panama indoor/outdoor rug in the Flax collection by Mulberi from Furtex, furtex.co.nz, pairs impeccably with wicker and timber furniture. It's particularly helpful that these rugs are water-repellent – you can clean them with a water blaster. ■





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COVER ART

Ornaments are nice to grace a side table, but they don't make you think. The small ceramic sculptures of Tessa Laird engage the mind on several levels as well as being a joy to look at. Laird is an avid reader of obscure texts, collected wherever possible with their original dust jackets. Those are often creatively designed and lettered – little works of art in their own right. Laird recreates them in clay with a degree of expressive freedom. As well as individual books, she makes small stacks, with the addition of decorative elements such as vegetation and figures. Until cuneiform was deciphered, the very earliest texts impressed in clay were unreadable. Laird's books are also unreadable and remind us of all those books on our own shelves that we have either never read or not opened in decades. The artist also models ziggurats, prints brightly coloured posters inspired by the graphics on exotic labels and wrappers and is writing a book about bats.
Warwick Brown



TESSA LAIRD

AGE: 44
LIVES IN: Auckland
REPRESENTED BY: Melanie Roger, Auckland
PRICE RANGE: $350–$2500
WORK ILLUSTRATED: Avant Gardening, 2013, ceramic, 44cm x 22cm x 15cm

Artists Living with Art

STACEY GOERGEN AND AMANDA BENCHLEY

Abrams, $82, 272 pages, hardback





This beautiful book offers an intimate glimpse into the homes and personal lives of 30 New York-based artists – 10 men, 10 women and five couples. Artists, like most people, acquire art because the work means something to them, or helps to energise or inspire them. The fascination of this book is comparing and connecting the art they create with the work they choose to collect and display. Painter Eric Fischl says: "There is work I like because it is along the lines of what I do, and then there's work I like because I can't do it." Artists often swap art and throughout the book you can see the interplay of relationships hanging on the walls – family portraits painted by peers, or special gifts such as a painting by Mel Bochner done for Carroll Dunham's 50th birthday. The book is also full of ideas readers can use for displaying their own art, with many examples of beautifully arranged mass hangings and displays. Chuck Close, renowned for reinventing the genre of portraiture, has installed three nearly 8m-long shelves in his foyer and filled them to overflowing with contemporary portraits, all propped against the wall, many with their frames overlapping (above). Judging by what can be seen here, the artists' homes are as interesting and varied as the art, including airy Manhattan lofts, a restored manor in the Hudson Valley, a former Baptist church in Harlem and a Japanese-inspired home in Greenwich Village. *Susan Thomas is NZ House & Garden's designer and an artist*

Chic Boutiquers at Home

ELLIE TENNANT

Ryland Peters & Small, NZ distributor Bookreps, $49.99, 160 pages, hardback

I have to admit that, although this book is filled with lovely images of homes from around the globe, I was much more interested in the practical advice that these creative and entrepreneurial homeowners had to offer on setting up an online store. It's this advice that takes *Chic Boutiquers at Home* from the realm of coffee table tome to a user-friendly manual for anyone who has considered dipping their toes into the world of e-commerce. Author Ellie Tennant talks to both artists and designers selling their own pieces online and shopkeepers who stock selections of goods made by others. Their advice is both practical ("Wrap your products carefully") and from the heart ("Go with your gut"). There's also a detailed chapter on setting up your own online store, including advice on finances, platforms, marketing and even choosing your shop's name. *Andrea Warmington is NZ H&G's staff writer*



PICK OF THE BLOGS – The Galloping Gardener

What horticultural aficionado wouldn't envy Charlotte Weychan's life – she travels the world visiting beautiful gardens, photographing them and blogging about her discoveries. Most are in the UK and US, with a smattering from Europe and Canada. When she's on tour, Charlotte visits several gardens a day so there are dozens reviewed (she only features places she likes). The Galloping Gardener is not the most stylishly designed blog, but it's crammed with information and photos – useful for anyone planning to visit gardens on an overseas trip.



Everything in Its Place

REBECCA WINWARD

Ryland Peters & Small, NZ distributor Bookreps, $54.99, 192 pages, hardback

It's a truth universally acknowledged that a person in possession of, well, possessions, must be in want of storage. This book has advice for those planning new builds or renovations (concealed cupboards seem the way to go) as well as those looking for ways to add storage to existing spaces. Tackling storage by room, type, purpose and style, it's full of useful tips, such as taking into account the storage potential of any new or second-hand furniture and remembering to think outside the square. *Andrea Warmington* >

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The Scandi Kitchen

BRONTË AURELL

Ryland Peters & Small, NZ distributor Bookreps,$45, 160 pages, hardback

Scandinavian sandwiches – I learned from this cookbook, which is full of insights into Nordic life – are almost always open-faced. Which explains why it dedicates an entire chapter to their toppings, including egg and creamed cod roe, and Swedish meatballs with beetroot. You'll also find a few recipes you're unlikely to have encountered before – quite a feat in this day and age – including sautéed reindeer. As is my wont, I was particularly taken with the sweet section and, boy, are there some splendid cakes. *Andrea Warmington*

Whole: Recipes for Simple Wholefood Eating

BRONWYN KAN

Beatnik, $45, 186 pages, hardback

Auckland graphic designer/photographer/food fan Bronwyn Kan has compiled these recipes from around a dozen of our best female wholefood bloggers and young entrepreneurs. Some of these names will be familiar to Auckland foodies and cafe-goers, such as Jordan Rondel of The Caker and Olivia Scott from Ponsonby's The Raw Kitchen. Their food is enticing – like barely cooked raspberry jam that uses chia seeds as the gelling agent; a 10-minute, one-bowl nut and seed bread; dairy-free mango and turmeric cheesecake; DIY raw chocolate bars and hazelnut milk; chia tea; and vegan banana ice cream. The simple goodness of it all is inspiring. *Sally Butters*





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MELTECA PURECOAT
Laminex New Zealand introduces Melteca Purecoat painted panels featuring cutting edge technologies in surface design and protection. The high-gloss panels are stain and scratch resistant, easy to clean and include anti-microbial properties. Melteca Purecoat is ideal for drawer fronts, cabinet doors, wall linings and large feature walls. *www.melteca.co.nz*



JASPER SOFA
The award-winning Jasper sofa is a truly modular design. Built around an engineered steel frame, Jasper is renowned for superior comfort and flexibility, with its arrangement of platforms and shelves which can be easily reconfigured to suit a wide range of seating options. *www.kingliving.com*



FIESTA
Much-loved US dinnerware brand American Fiesta is now available in New Zealand. American Fiesta is extremely durable – it carries a five-year chip warranty, so it can easily withstand life in the busiest of home kitchens.
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The stunning new Axella collection is a modern geometric coordinate story that pieces together effortlessly. The luxuriously tactile natural texture works with the move to more organic interiors. A sophisticated blend of cotton, linen, polyester and viscose gives a soft sumptuous quality with durable performance. *www.warwick.co.nz*



HAVANA BEDROOM COLLECTION
New to Danske Mobler is the stunning Havana bedroom collection in acacia wood with two-tone grey highlights. Metal legs and underframes lend a muted industrial look while retaining crisp, eye-catching lines.
www.danskemobler.nz

LIEBHERR LUXURY
A completely refreshed range of 60cm fully integrated refrigeration is now available from Liebherr, offering an extensive selection of fridge or freezer combinations to best suit your lifestyle and kitchen designs. Standout features include BioFresh for the ultimate in food preservation and built-in automatic ice makers for added convenience. Designed and manufactured in Germany, Liebherr ensures world class performance and satisfaction.
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Elegant Belgian outdoor brand Manutti specialises in transposing the concept of indoor living rooms to outdoors. The elegant lines and natural tones of the San Diego Collection exude timeless appeal. All pieces are designed for optimum comfort, made for lounging by the pool and conversations with friends.
www.manutti.com

GALLERY 4
Gallery 4 is a new concept from Smail & Co, introducing a range of artisan tiles to the New Zealand market. The Pinos tile is designed by Carme Pinos in association with Huguet in Spain.
Call (09) 309 9109 or (03) 343 0969 for more information, www.gallery4.co.nz



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ST CLEMENT'S

Three siblings with an affinity for good furniture run this stylish new showroom in the heart of Eden Terrace (an area that's rapidly transforming into something of a design destination). Currently, St Clement's stocks furniture from Australia's MCM House, but the siblings are also looking to design their own pieces in the future.
68 France St South, Eden Terrace, (09) 336 1304, stclements.co.nz



TEA TOTAL

Tea Total's lovely new concept store in Mairangi Bay is the fulfilment of a long-held dream for founder Anna Salek, who established Tea Total 20 years ago. Since then it's become a leading wholesaler of speciality teas, with more than 150 varieties. They're all on display at the store, along with detailed descriptions of each, lovingly written by Anna. They even provide clipboards for noting your favourite teas as you browse.
5 Apollo Dr, Mairangi Bay, 0800 832 868, teatotal.co.nz



SUPERETTE

Cult fashion boutique Superette has just opened its fourth store in Takapuna. The sleek new flagship includes a lovely little corner dedicated to homewares, including Claybird Ceramics, In Bed's range of linen and Marble Basics, as well as some of Superette's own exclusive designs and collaborations.
486 Lake Rd, Takapuna, (09) 360 2368, superette.co.nz

HAMILTON DENISE IRVINE



GREY GARDENS

While you're in Hamilton East, nip down a side lane to the tucked-away Grey Gardens coffee shop for a caffeine fix made by excellent barista Bardo Ashton. Grey Gardens also sells vintage and new crafts and homewares, the quirky displays sitting comfortably alongside the cafe's retro furnishings. The coffee's from Hamilton roasters Rocket, there's a small selection of edibles, and a friendly vibe in the air.
Shed 6, 394 Grey St, Hamilton East, (07) 974 3511, greygardens.co.nz

DUCK ISLAND ICE CREAM



You'll need to take your time at Hamilton East's stylish new ice cream parlour. Will it be the chocolate-chilli combo, maybe blackberry and sage, or is it a day for cardamom, lime and yoghurt? It's a big decision because there is much to tempt and admire at Duck Island, where they do luscious, handcrafted, boldly flavoured, real-deal ice creams, using seasonal fruits and all-natural ingredients, no food colouring or stabilisers. Highly recommended.
300 Grey St, Hamilton East, (07) 856 5948

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BROWSERS BOOKSHOP

This is a city treasure, a second-hand bookshop operating in the heart of the CBD for nearly 20 years that's like a cross between a library and a vintage sitting room. Run by book-lover (of course) Rachel Pope, Browsers buys and sells quality books – the latest fiction, kids' books, specialist topics, some rare titles. You'll never leave empty-handed.
221 Victoria St, Hamilton, (07) 839 1919, browsersbooks.co.nz

NELSON JACQUETTA BELL

LATE NIGHT ON HARDY

In Nelson we're recreating the buzz of late-night shopping with Late Night on Hardy, on the last Thursday of every month. Organiser Catherine Potton, of Craig Potton Gallery, has convinced other galleries, cafes and shops along Hardy Street and Morrison Square to stay open from 5pm-8pm, with special deals, events, talks, kids' nights, dinners...
Craig Potton Gallery, 255 Hardy St, facebook.com/latenightonhardy

THE OLD POST OFFICE



In Upper Moutere, in the heart of berry country, just 30 minutes from Nelson, the lovely old wooden post office is now home to Moutere Gold gourmet preserves (the Black-currant & Vanilla Bean Jam is particularly delish), Harakeke Farm wines and a gallery with local art and some items for the kitchen and table. Check out the handmade cushions, leather bags and silver and wooden jewellery. Sip a coffee with fresh baking and take home Rodrigo's famous sourdough bread, free-range eggs and other seasonal produce from Moutere farmers.
1381 Moutere Highway, (03) 543 2780, mouteregold.co.nz



THE HOLLOW

It's a brave move to open a tea shop in what passes for Nelson's nightclub zone. But co-owner Ishna Jacobs is hoping summer evenings will see people opting for a cuppa rather than a cocktail. Daytime business is building, thanks to the allure of Harney & Sons' teas, home baking and calm, creative surrounds. Ishna loves the beauty and ceremony of tea and does it beautifully. Leaf tea comes on a pretty tray with an eclectic choice of ceramic teapots, jugs and cups. Future plans include music nights, poetry and art shows.
144 Bridge St, (03) 546 7935, thehollow.co.nz

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350 Port Hills Rd, 027 391 8250, chiselandvice.co.nz

CITY ART DEPOT

If you need advice on how best to present your art collection, head to City Art Depot. The team at this gallery (which also holds monthly exhibitions) will stretch and frame your artworks and advise on the best options for displaying your entire collection in your home, taking into account the space and light you have to work with.
96 Disraeli St, (03) 365 3811, cityart.co.nz

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99 Victoria St, (03) 420 2211, finefarekitchen.co.nz





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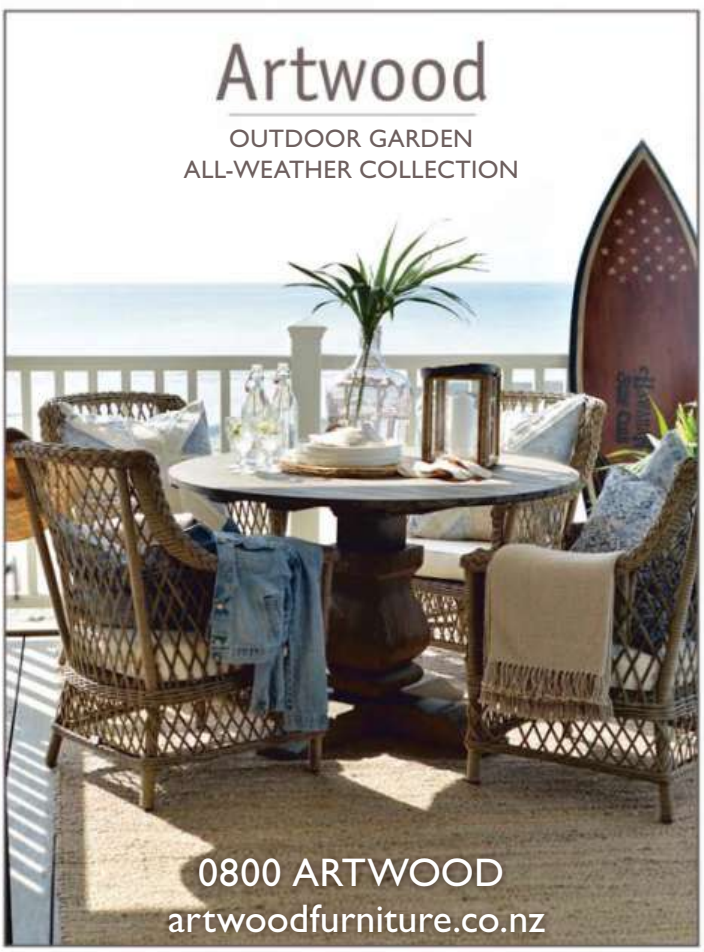
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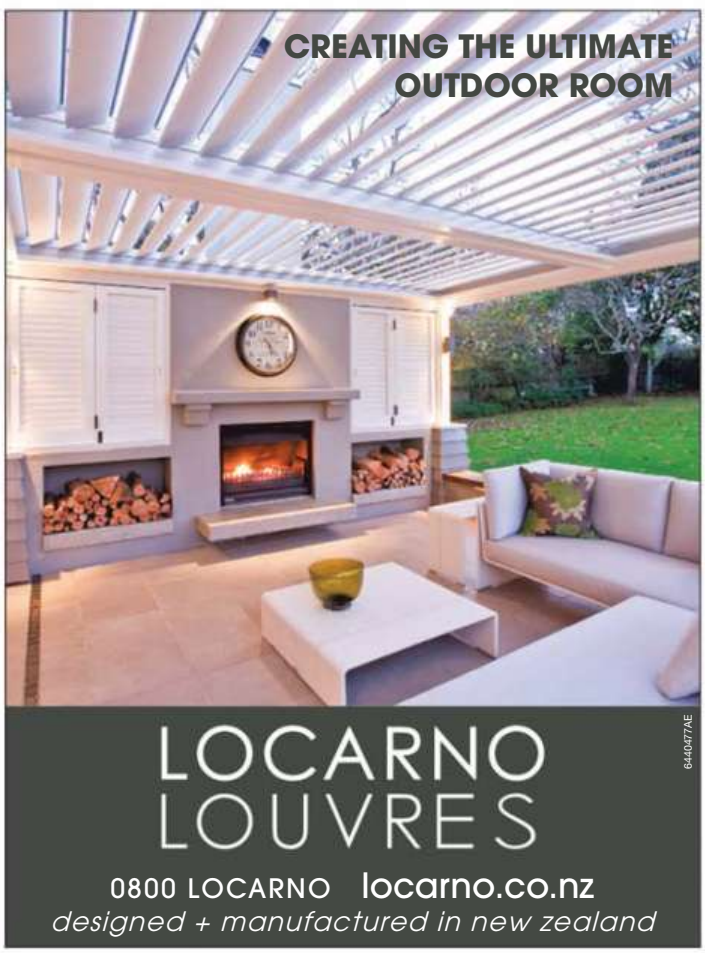
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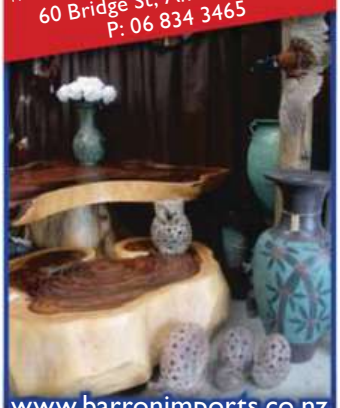
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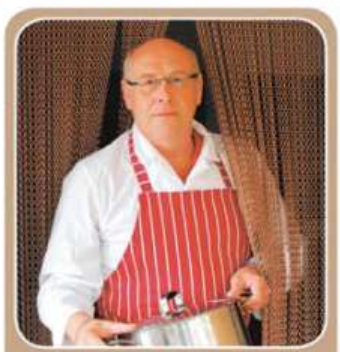
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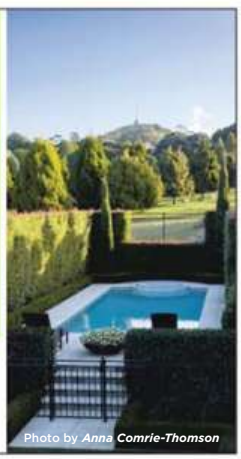
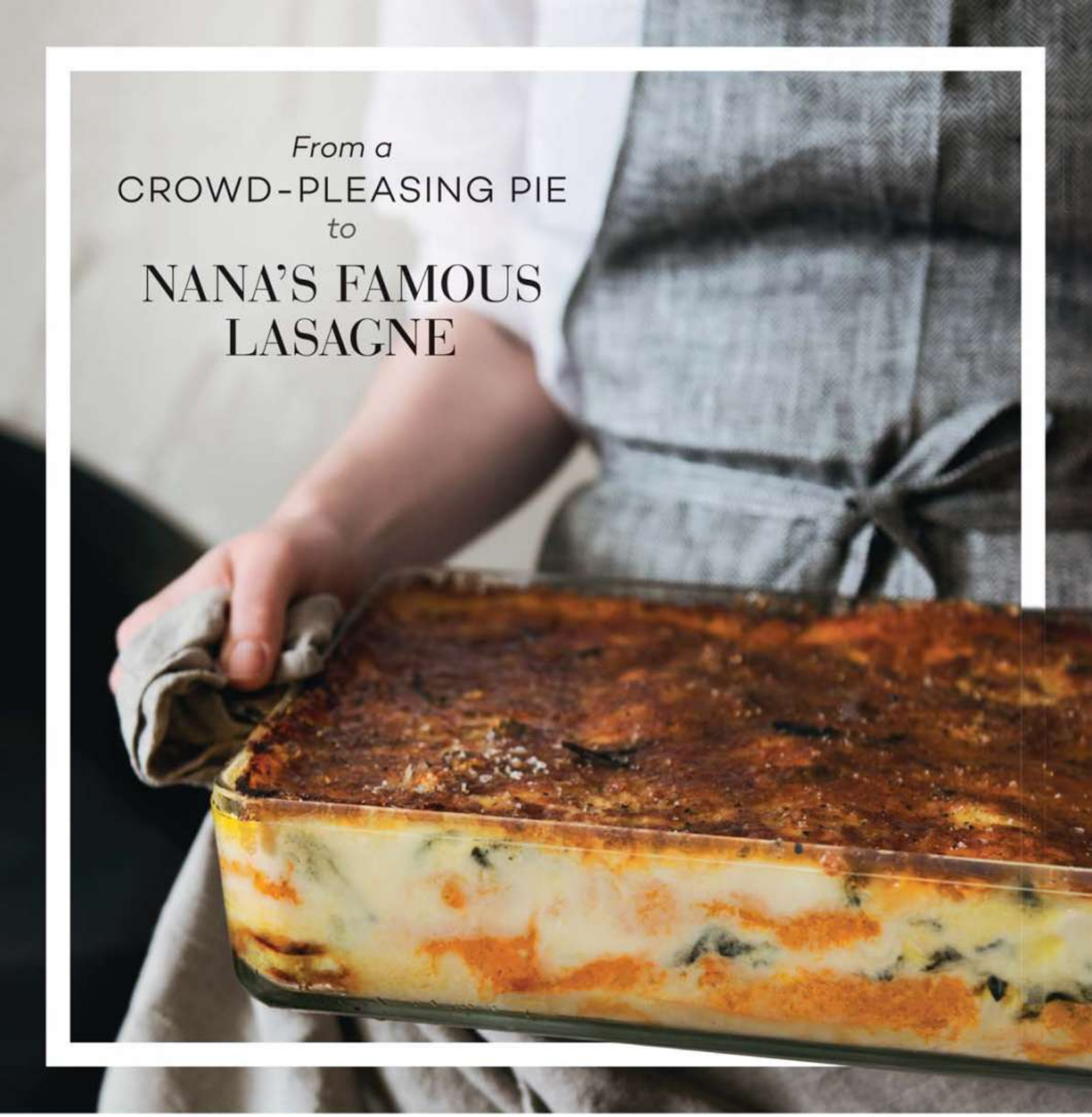


Photo by *Anna Comrie-Thomson*

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NOTE: THESE IMAGES ARE INDICATIVE ONLY. WINNERS HAD NOT BEEN CHOSEN AT TIME OF PUBLICATION AND WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON 15 OCTOBER





NZHOUSE & GARDEN

INTERIOR of the YEAR 2015

SPECIAL ISSUE

NZ'S BEST ROOMS REVEALED!

In our November issue, we reveal winners and finalists from all categories of our awards:

KITCHENS • BATHROOMS • LIVING ROOMS • BEDROOMS • CREATIVE SPACES • INDOOR/OUTDOOR AREAS

That's a total of 19 fabulous spaces to enjoy. *PLUS*, of course, there'll be the usual line-up of lovely homes, gardens, food and smart ideas you expect from your favourite home magazine.

NOVEMBER ISSUE ON SALE FROM 19 OCTOBER

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Set the scene with pretty pastels, then invite Mother Nature to the party

Celebrate the return of blue-sky days by creating a delicately toned setting for a spring gathering (see page 126 for our delicious high tea menu). Gentle pastels are the perfect choice for a light and sunny spring look. Perk up tired spindle-back chairs with a quick paint job (try Resene 'Pretty in Pink' and Resene 'Renew'), keeping it modern by leaving the legs au naturel. Decorate the table with a toning selection of spring blossoms, and tie it all together with a subtle ombré tablecloth combining your hues du jour (look online for ombré dyeing instructions). Bon appetit!

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